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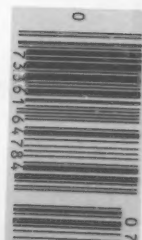
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AND TO SPEAK OUT
FOR WHAT IS
RIGHT, FAIR,
AND DECENT"

From the founding editorial,
1961



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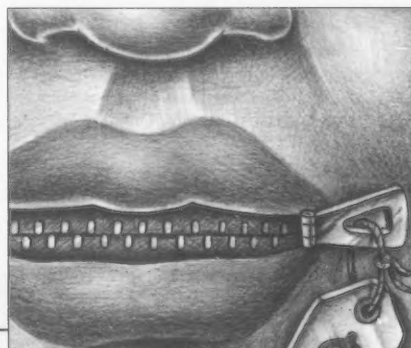
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LETTERS

WHITEWATER WAKE

Regarding "Churning Whitewater" (CJR, May/June), the clear implication that I obtained (1) a copy of the \$300,000 check to Susan McDougal, and (2) a copy of the power of attorney letter signed by Hillary Rodham Clinton from Dave Bossie and/or Citizens United was very disturbing and, more important, false.

For the record, I did not seek, nor did I obtain, any documents from Mr. Bossie or Citizens United regarding Mrs. McDougal or Mrs. Clinton. It simply did not happen.

Furthermore, I find it distressing that no attempt was made by the writer or CJR to talk with me or anyone at *The Washington Times*, while, judging by interviews in the article, the writer did have time to call *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *Newsweek*, and NBC.

JERRY SEPER
NATIONAL REPORTER
THE WASHINGTON TIMES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

We wish to register a complaint about Trudy Lieberman's piece on Floyd Brown. The lead anecdote of the piece focused on our reporter, Bruce Ingersoll, who has broken — with no help or "bait" supplied by Floyd Brown or his organization — several important stories on the Whitewater affair. The story suggests, wrongly, that *The Wall Street Journal* is among the newspapers that have been feeding from Brown's hand.

Had Lieberman called Ingersoll, she would have found out that neither he nor any other news reporter for the *Journal* has written stories based on information or material provided by Citizens United. Indeed, we were one of the first to point out — in our own story — Brown's unusual role as a media tipster on Whitewater.

Furthermore, Lieberman wrongly "presumes" that Beverly was Beverly Bassett Schaeffer. In fact, the Beverly alluded to in the conversation was Beverly Enterprises, a

nursing home chain and Rose firm client. Again, Lieberman could have found this out if she had called Ingersoll instead of presuming.

ALAN MURRAY
WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trudy Lieberman replies: *My article did not presume to trace where each reporter got each piece of evidence about Whitewater, but showed how the evidence in the Citizens United Whitewater collection got circulated and recycled through the press.*

I heard a conversation between David Bossie of Citizens United and a caller whom he identified as Bruce Ingersoll of The Wall Street Journal who was pressing Bossie to supply him with Whitewater-related information. I merely described the conversation I heard and which Murray confirms in his letter. My piece did acknowledge that The Wall Street Journal, as well as the Chicago Tribune, had written stories on Citizens United.

Editors' Note: *Jeff Gerth, the New York Times reporter who broke the Whitewater story in March 1992, has objected to the fact that we failed to ask him how his interview with David Hale came about and implied*

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that *Citizens United* played a part. We have no evidence of such a connection. To set the record straight, here is Gerth's account of the sequence of events: although Hale's lawyer made the first call to the Times to suggest an interview, it was Hale himself who negotiated the ground rules for the interview in extended discussions with the paper; there were no intermediaries.

VANDERBILT'S ARCHIVE

Both the headline of the article "Who Owns Old News?" (CJR, May/June) and the comments attributed to representatives of CBS and ABC about the Vanderbilt Television News Archive missed the point.

The Vanderbilt Television News Archive makes no claim that it owns the news. Neither does it dispute the copyright of the networks; indeed, the archive routinely informs users that the networks own the copyright of the material.

More to the point, the same statute that provides the networks with copyright protection also protects the lending by libraries and archives of copyrighted audio-visual news programs (17 U.S.C. §108 (f) (3)). The copyright statute also sets forth detailed conditions for distribution of copyright material by libraries and archives, all of which the Vanderbilt Television News

Archive scrupulously follows. One of those conditions, incidentally, requires that the collection be accessible either to the public generally or at least to all researchers whether or not they are affiliated with the institution of which the library or archive is a part. From the beginning of Vanderbilt Television News Archive a quarter of a century ago, all of the collection has been accessible to anyone. To the best of my knowledge, that is not the case with any other library or archive of network news broadcasts, nor is it the case with the networks' own archives.

I should also note that if the concern of the networks has to do with profit, there is not much to be had doing what the Vanderbilt Television News Archive does. It now has a cumulative deficit exceeding \$1 million and, because of that, an uncertain future.

JEFF CARR

VICE-CHANCELLOR
FOR UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
AND GENERAL COUNSEL
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
NASHVILLE, TENN.

The editors reply: *The article pointed out that "the tapes are loaned, not sold," and took note of the "new copyright law that included a fair-usage clause, which allowed noncommercial duplication of the news."*

THE BODY-COUNT QUOTE

In "Lucasville Follies" (CJR, May/June), Bruce Porter quotes me as justifying what turned out to be untrue reports of additional dead bodies inside the Lucasville prison by saying, "You're saying 150 unnamed, faceless inmates in there are dead. No one's going to be able to come back later and say, 'Gee, you were wrong, and we're going to sue you.'"

While I was not misquoted, that statement was made during a long and rambling interview about the general reasons the media printed unconfirmed stories of dead bodies.

My reason for printing the "body count" was not because we could not be sued, but because we firmly believed it to be true at the time, having come from the same sources who provided us with numerous items of information, the rest of which all turned out to be dependable.

The *Daily Times* is proud of its coverage of the Lucasville riot, which resulted in winning the Ohio Associated Press first-place award for Breaking News Coverage in 1993, as well as Thomson Newspapers' top honor in the same category.

GARY ABERNATHY

MANAGING EDITOR
PORTSMOUTH DAILY TIMES
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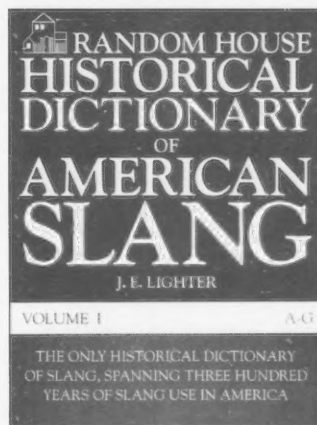
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CHECK POINTS ON LA FRONTERA

In "Confronting *La Frontera*" (CJR, May/June), Joe Holley calls Mexico's Baja California Norte "a state." Not so. The name of the state is Baja California. It hasn't been Baja California Norte for years.

He calls Governor Ernesto Ruffo "Mexico's only opposition party governor." Again, not so. There are three opposition party governors in Mexico — the governors of Baja California, Chihuahua, and Guanajuato.

More important, while burling on about the *Los Angeles Times* and a bunch of Texas papers, Holley doesn't even mention the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

For the record, the *Union-Tribune* has two full-time reporters covering Tijuana (Gregory Gross and Sandra Dibble); a financial reporter (Diane Lindquist), who is virtually full time on the *maquiladora* beat and who is probably the most knowledgeable in the region on the subject; a full-time reporter (Leonel Sanchez) who covers the *frontera* just north of the border; and a Copley News Service bureau, headed by Lynne Walker, in Mexico City. In addition, another full-time reporter (Arthur Golden, another superbly knowledgeable reporter) is assigned to Latin American coverage. These staffers are all bilingual.

The *Union-Tribune's* border coverage isn't all just shoot-em-ups and Cinco de Mayo. A computer check shows Gross had 87 stories in the 126 days from January 3 to May 7, virtually all on Baja California. Coverage elsewhere may be, as Holley puts it, "spotty," but not in San Diego.

ALFRED JACOBY
DEL MAR, CALIF.

(JaCoby was an assistant managing editor at The San Diego Union before his recent retirement. He is currently writing a history of the newspaper.)

Editors' Note: Baja California is the state's official name, but it is often referred to as Baja California Norte to distinguish it from Baja California Sur, the southern state on the same peninsula. As for Mexico's opposition party governors, we regret the error, which was based on information supplied by the Mexican consulate in New York.

BUSINESS, BATTLES, AND BRIDGES

I don't believe that Spencer Sherman, the author of "NHK TV Japan: East Meets West in the Newsroom" (CJR, March/April), meant to imply that since his departure as

executive producer of *Japan Business Today* the program has turned into a nonjournalistic mouthpiece for corporate Japan. Because it hasn't.

Yes, we continue to fight editorial battles such as those cited in Sherman's piece. But the international effort remains a solid piece of daily journalism that the remaining "American-trained" journalists (there are five of us) are proud of, a product that Sherman deserves much credit for.

If the newsroom situation were ethically repugnant, we'd all have followed our former boss out the door. I'm sure other factors entered into Sherman's decision to leave. I wish he would have stayed to help bridge the "misunderstandings" and "technical differences" that arise in a multicultural effort of this magnitude.

DALTON TANONAKA
ANCHOR
JAPAN BUSINESS TODAY
TOKYO

ACCESS IN MAQUILA LAND

In "Border Conflicts" (CJR, March/April), Bruce Selcraig suggests that *Brownsville Herald* reporter Tony Vindell must have cut some kind of devil's deal with *maquila* managers to win photographic access to their plants, access often denied to "the mainstream [and presumably more ethical] business press."

No doubt about it, *maquila* officials on the Mexican border are gun-shy of traveling writers, whom they often perceive as little more than anti-NAFTA gunslingers. Access to unknowns can be hard to come by.

But in two years of covering *maquiladoras* in Matamoros for the *Herald* — years in which I reported on the alleged dumping of huge quantities of xylene by a General Motors bumper manufacturer, the birth to the wife of a *maquila* worker from the same plant of an anencephalic child, the apparent *maquila* manipulation of Mexican labor negotiations, and the virtual impossibility of trying to live on the wages they pay their workers — I always enjoyed free access to *maquila* plants and to their managers and workers. (I should add for the record that I never wrote for *Twin Plant News* or *Maquila* magazine, though I wouldn't necessarily condemn free-lancing reporters for doing so.)

Plant managers told me that my access was due to the fact that no matter what I reported against them, I always gave them fair play for their side of the story. To me, that fair play is a substantial portion of any ethical code.

PHILIP TRUE
LAREDO, TEX.

RIDDLED WITH ERROR

There's a lot more to be said about the press's inability to shoot straight — or even hit the target — when it comes to reporting on guns than what was said in "Bang! Bang! You're Wrong!" (CJR, January/February). Two widely viewed pieces of misreporting point up the press's almost willful inability to get things straight.

On November 23, 1993, NBC's *Dateline* ran a program, "Deadly Bullets," about the Black Talon, a hollow-point handgun bullet developed by Winchester. Program participants claimed that this bullet causes such "carnage" that it "should not exist in a civilized society." An animation showed what purportedly differentiates the Black Talon from less destructive ammunition. A "conventional" bullet bored a hole straight through the body: the Black Talon penetrated the torso, but instead of exiting when it reached the opposite abdominal wall, made a sharp turn of about 120 degrees, penetrated downward for six or seven inches, then made another sharp turn and formed a triangle by going back across the first leg of its path. While following this path, the bullet was shown producing a swath of destruction about three inches in diameter.

No penetrating projectile can produce a path in the body with angles even remotely resembling those shown for the Black Talon. The Black Talon handgun bullet's expanded diameter is about a half-inch; a half-inch-diameter handgun bullet cannot destroy a cylinder of tissue three inches in diameter.

The media's furor over this bullet was caused, in part, by Gian Luigi Ferri's July 1993 shooting spree in a San Francisco office building. He killed nine, including himself: he happened to use the Black Talon, as well as nonexpanding (full-metal-jacketed) bullets. Recently, I went to San Francisco and read the autopsies of those killed by Ferri: these reports include the wound dimensions and directions of the bullet paths. These public record documents, readily available to any investigative reporter, show that the Black Talon bullets performed like the "conventional" bullet with which they were contrasted in NBC's animation. Dr. Boyd Stephens, chief medical examiner of San Francisco, who supervised the autopsies, emphasized to me and others that the paths made by the Black Talon bullets were indistinguishable from those made by the nonexpanding ("conventional") bullets.

Earlier, on March 28, 1991, *NBC Nightly News* aired a misrepresentation that went unexposed and may have helped sink a body-armor manufacturer. It led viewers to believe that a Jacksonville, Florida, police officer had been killed because his body

armor failed to stop a bullet. In reality, no bullet had perforated his armor — this fact, also, is available in the public record autopsy. Within a year after Tom Brokaw concluded his segment by singling out the American Body Armor Company as one of the companies whose vests had failed a recent FBI test, the company filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy law. This body-armor maker had opposed the National Institute of Justice in a bitter dispute over the NIJ's flawed Police Soft Body Armor Test. I wrote to Brokaw with documentation showing that he had been deceived by the NIJ: to no avail. The body-armor dispute was later investigated by the federal Office of Technological Assessment. The OTA report, released in August 1992, strongly supported the critics of the NIJ test, and recommended that the flawed test be changed. However, nothing has been done, and about twenty police officers per year continue to die because they were not wearing soft body armor when shot. In order to pass the NIJ test, vests must be made heavy, stiff, and uncomfortable: police tend not to wear uncomfortable vests.

MARTIN L. FACKLER, M.D.
PRESIDENT
INTERNATIONAL WOUND
BALLISTICS ASSOCIATION
HAWTHORNE, FLA.

ROSE'S DISCLOSURES

In correspondence subsequent to a Correction that appeared in the May/June CJR, I. Nelson Rose, a professor of law at Whittier Law School who has served as a consultant to government and industry on matters related to legalized gambling, has brought up a number of points. Contesting the assertion by Stephen J. Simurda in "When Gambling Comes to Town" (CJR, January/February) that Rose "doesn't always volunteer information" about his involvement in a plan to develop a string of Indian-owned casinos in southern California, Rose writes: "I have given dozens of speeches and spoken with hundreds of reporters over the years. I always begin my public presentation with a disclaimer, describing my involvement with Indian gambling." Regarding Simurda's observation that "nowhere in his nine-page vita" does Rose mention his three-year involvement in that plan, he writes: "I only deleted references to my developing Indian casinos from my curriculum vitae and biography last year, when I ceased to play any role in the project. My only involvement now is as an equity holder."

Rose also faults the Correction for failing to point out that Simurda served as editorial consultant for a study titled "Legalized Gambling as a Strategy for Economic

Development," funded by the Aspen Institute and the Ford Foundation and written by Robert Goodman, mentioned by Simurda in the CJR piece.

Asked to comment on this matter, Simurda described the extent of his services: "During the time Goodman was completing his study and while I was working on the CJR article, we spoke about his findings. Near the end of his study, he asked if he could list me as editorial consultant because I had read and given my reactions to several sections of the study. That was in December of 1993, after my article had been written and edited. I saw no problem with this and agreed."

Finally, Rose writes, the original article referred to Goodman as being "at" the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, giving "the false impression that Goodman is a professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst," whereas he is an "unpaid adjunct." Like adjuncts elsewhere, Goodman is paid by the university that hired him when he is teaching at that university, though not when he is a visiting professor elsewhere, as he currently is at Hampshire College. Meanwhile, the chairman of his department confirms that Goodman has been an adjunct professor at the University of Massachusetts since September 1991, with an appointment that runs through August of 1996. —The Editors



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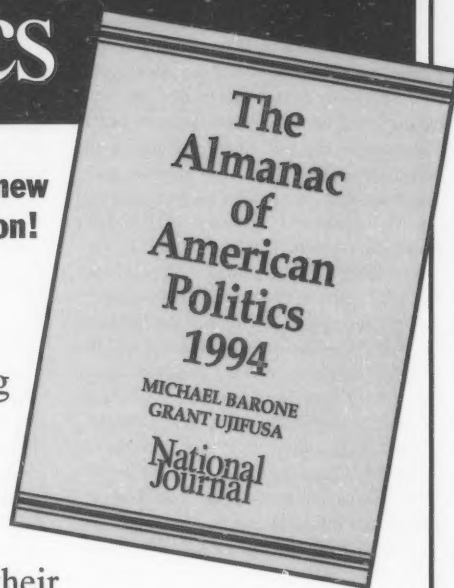
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CHRONICLE

WHY KILL A GOLDEN GOOSE?

The Mysak Mystery at *The Bond Buyer*

Many trade publications are slaves to the industries they cover. Not *The Bond Buyer*. The 103-year-old daily stands out for its solid and tenacious coverage of a powerful and little-understood business.

According to a number of *Bond Buyer* staff members, much of the credit for this goes to Joe Mysak, thirty-six, who joined the paper in 1981, became its editor in 1992, and added the title of publisher in 1993. Under Mysak, *The Bond Buyer* has been getting rave reviews for its exposés on the role of bond underwriters in political campaigns. One example is Charles Gasparino's coverage of the low-rate campaign loans former New York City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman took from outfits that were under consideration by her office for lucrative municipal underwriting contracts. While other media went after Holtzman alone, *The Bond Buyer* showed that hers was hardly an isolated case.

The paper showed how the bond industry can use consultants to get around its own limits on campaign contributions. It cited the role of White House adviser Rahm Emanuel, who was paid by Goldman, Sachs as a consultant while working as a Clinton fundraiser. And *The Bond Buyer* published critical pieces on the relationship between Mark Ferber, the investment banker who held sway over many municipal financings in Massachusetts, and William M. Bolger, the head of the state senate and perhaps the most powerful man in Massachusetts politics.

As editor, "Joe was able to inspire the



Joe Mysak of *The Bond Buyer* was "kind of surprised" when he was fired this spring. So was his loyal staff.

troops, keep us on our toes, and make us work our asses off for him," says a staff member who asked not to be identified. And as publisher, "the money was real good, and circulation was at an all-time record, display advertising was over projections for '93," says another staff member. *The Bond Buyer* has more than doubled its pages in recent years. It reportedly made a profit of \$8 million last year.

So why, in late March, was Mysak fired? Why kill the golden goose? Mysak himself says he was "kind of surprised" and compared his situation to that of a baseball pitcher once pulled out of a game by the legendary Casey Stengel: "The pitcher says, 'I'm not tired.' Stengel says, 'I'm tired of you.'" Some staff members think that something as petty as jealousy over the staff's loyalty to Mysak may have played a role in the editor's departure; others believe it was *The Bond Buyer's* hard reporting that sank him.

The man who did the firing, David Branch, president of the *Buyer* and its sister publication, *The American Banker* (the papers are owned by Canada's Thomson chain), says Mysak "was a very good editor [but] we had serious disagreements based strictly on his performance as publisher." Branch says he

offered Mysak a chance to keep the editing part of his job, but Mysak says that "by the end of the week that offer was no longer on the table." Branch, who cut his teeth at the Fairchild trades and joined Thomson in 1992, is blamed by some at *The Bond Buyer* for taking the edge off *The American Banker*. He's something of an odd duck, a man who several eyewitnesses say used to keep a bust of Adolph Hitler on his desk. Branch denies having such a bust, but managing editor John Doran disputes this, saying he clearly recalls advising Branch to remove it.

To replace Mysak as editor, Branch brought in John Allan, who is respected but close to retirement, and named a separate publisher, Jeff Weiner. Branch's decision to divide Mysak's job, *Bond Buyer* watchers believe, was based on his desire to consolidate control.

What some of them wonder is, why? After news of the firing went out, one of the first people to call the paper was the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Arthur Levitt. "We were concerned about rumors on why Mysak was replaced," says SEC spokeswoman Jennifer Kimball. The

rumors that David Clapp — the partner in charge of the municipal bonds department at Goldman, Sachs — had heard prompted him to complain to *The Bond Buyer* in a letter that he feared “that the newspaper might cease to be the hard-hitting and influential force that it has become in our industry.” Clapp says his letter resulted in a visit from Branch and his new publisher, who asked about how the paper is perceived and for suggestions as to how to shape it. Clapp says he often disagreed with Mysak’s approach at *The Bond Buyer*, but “we’re not supposed to agree.”

Clearly, not everyone in the municipal bond business shares Clapp’s tolerance for the investigative-minded editor. According to an anonymous source quoted in the *New York Post*, traders at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, a sometime *Bond Buyer* target, “got on their feet and cheered” when news of Mysak’s firing broke.

The celebration may have been premature, however. Mysak has joined Jim Grant, publisher of *Grant’s Interest Rate Observer*, where he is setting up a new municipal bond report.

Russ W. Baker

Baker is a New York-based writer.

GOOD MORNING, TUNTUTULIAK!

Beyond “Dance and Dysfunction” in Alaska

Before television arrived in 1977 in Alaska’s tiny native villages — places with names like Tuntutuliak and Kivalina and Noatak — storytelling and visiting were the dominant forms of entertainment. Today, in many villages, TV seems ubiquitous, blasting a constant stream of crime shows and Burger King



Jeanie Greene’s aggressively unprofessional and unabashedly hokey *Heartbeat Alaska* covers native villages “with no apologies.”

commercials. And then there’s *Heartbeat Alaska*, the brainchild of Jeanie Greene, an Inupiat with more previous experience in dinner theater than in journalism.

Heartbeat is aggressively unprofessional. In addition to its low technical quality, the show is unabashedly hokey. Greene says that’s because it belongs to the native people who record the raw video and watch the edited product. “This is who we are, this is where we live, with no apologies,” she says. “I’ve given us permission to be on the air as ourselves. My stuff is working because I’m not trying to do it the white way.”

In one segment, children from Nulato honor their elders, using such traditional compliments as “You build fish traps and you used to be a great dog musher”; in another the camera lingers for minutes on a North Slope elder talking about how the federal government’s dumping of nuclear waste may have harmed the land his village subsists on; in others, villagers use their video cameras to demonstrate traditional food gathering — berry picking, whaling — and how to make Eskimo ice cream.

“If an elder tells me something, that’s good enough for me,” Greene says. “That’s my dictionary, an elder’s voice.”

Three years ago Greene had the idea to broadcast amateur video from the villages on the state’s Rural Alaska Television Network, which reaches 247 communities. She started producing the show in 1992 in her apartment; now she

has a studio with a small staff. But the result is still as far from mainstream TV journalism as Noatak is from New York.

Rural Alaska TV Network, known as RATNET, has not conducted a popularity survey since the show went on the air, but *Heartbeat* appears to be hugely popular in rural Alaska. The program is also broadcast across northern Canada and in Greenland, the Russian far east, and Arizona.

The mainstream news media’s relationship with indigenous Alaska has never been easy. There are only a handful of native journalists in Alaska, and native leaders often complain that white reporters overemphasize their people’s problems without bothering to understand their culture — or even what constitutes polite behavior in the villages. For example, a white reporter’s attempt to make eye contact with an Alaska native interview subject could be taken as an insult in a culture in which keeping eyes downcast is a sign of respect.

Gary Fife, a Muscogee Creek-Cherokee from Oklahoma who seven years ago helped found *National Native News*, a public radio program now playing on 171 stations, says the failure of the mainstream media to tell natives’ stories left a void for *Heartbeat* to fill. He quit *National Native News* in January over editorial differences with the network and has gone to work with Greene.

Some in the mainstream say *Heartbeat*, by telling natives’ stories only from their own perspective, takes a shortcut around traditional journalistic standards. Fife disagrees. “All you got [from the

mainstream media] was either dance or dysfunction," he says. Greene and Fife insist they will still cover tough stories, like the alcoholism and suicide ravaging rural Alaska. But Fife says such stories, too, must come from the inside: "Our own people have to come to these very harsh realizations themselves."

Charles Wohlforth

Wohlforth is a free-lance writer and a city assemblyman who lives in Anchorage.

WHITTLED DOWN?

A Media Maverick's Altered Expectations

These are hardly halcyon days for Chris Whittle, the media maverick who in the 1980s vowed to revolutionize the industry with his unorthodox magazines, books, television shows, posters, and pamphlets. Many of his high-profile, ambitious properties have been scuttled.

Whittle Communications, the company he established in 1986, once was home to more than thirty small-niche print properties. Today it has staked its future on three risky ventures: Medical News Network (MNN), an interactive information service for doctors; the Edison Project, a for-profit schools chain; and Channel One, the MTV-style classroom news show (see "On Chris Whittle's School-News Scheme," *CJR*, May/June 1989).

To focus on these electronic efforts the company has virtually abandoned print media and diminished its journalistic efforts. The latest such project to go was *Special Report*, the network of magazines, posters, and TV programs distributed to 32,000 doctors' offices — once one of its premier efforts. But nothing raises Whittle executives' ire more than the notion that journalism has faded at Whittle Communications. "Journalism is more vital to the company than it has ever been," says David Neuman, Channel One's president of programming.



Chris Whittle: "I think we were arrogant."

"Every day we do a national newscast that reaches 40 percent of all teenagers."

The privately held company, which has about \$200 million in revenues, has also struggled with two years of sliding sales. One of its key financial partners, Time Warner Inc., wants to divest its 37 percent stake, and Whittle has recently taken on a new president, former Philips Consumer Electronics

Company executive Donald F. Johnstone, to keep a closer eye on finance and operational matters. (Philips has a 25 percent stake in the company; other backers include Associated Newspaper Holdings, with 24.6 percent, and Chris Whittle and various limited partners, with 13.4 percent.)

All of this has pegged Chris Whittle as someone who promises too much. "Whittle is a big thinker, maybe too

What's wrong with the press?

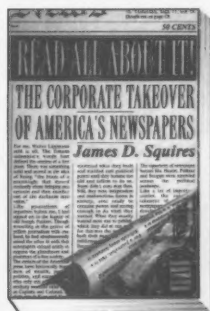
READ ALL ABOUT IT!

The Corporate Takeover of America's Newspapers

by James D. Squires

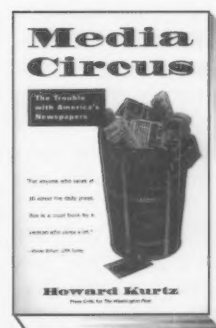
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The corporate takeover of our newspapers in "a thoroughly welcome screed against bloodless avarice."

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MEDIA CIRCUS

The Trouble with America's Newspapers
NEW UPDATED EDITION

by Howard Kurtz

"The irrepressible Kurtz has had a merry time mucking around inside the thin-skinned press establishment."

— Carl Sessions Stepp, *American Journalism Review*

T I M E S B O O K S

big," says George Hayes, senior vice-president of McCann-Erickson New York, an advertising agency. "He made everything he did sound grandiose and revolutionary. But if you took a closer look, you could see he didn't build much groundwork for the future and his claims really didn't prove out."

Chris Whittle admits he made mistakes. "I think we were at one time arrogant," he says. "We thumbed our nose at conventional media and we paid a price for that." But he believes he has led the company on a sound, if sometimes rocky, road.

"We are fundamentally the same company we were five years ago: a place-based information company in the education and health care sectors," he says. "But we decided to move to a bigger pond, to electronic media, because we realized it would make this a much more valuable, powerful, and lucrative business."

To be sure, the TV efforts appear to have greater financial potential than Whittle's print endeavors. He estimates that Channel One could be a \$250 million-a-year business, and MNN could do double that. Furthermore, these enterprises are pioneering interactive television at a time when many other media firms are only starting to talk about it. MNN, for example, offers its audience the chance to access everything from medical journals to product samples.

The company's news roots are certainly evident at MNN. In windowless studios in an underground floor of Rockefeller Center, a staff of 100 assembles a daily twelve-minute news program and various specials that report medical trends, events, conferences, and news.

"Everyone here is trying to create much more realistic expectations," says Geoffrey Darby, MNN's programming chief. Everyone, that is, but Chris Whittle. "Certainly, we didn't evolve gracefully, but we're always going to be out there carving our own path," he says. "I challenge you to think of any \$200 million media company that has the prospects we have."

Alan Mirabella

Mirabella is a media reporter for Crain's New York Business.

SOUND BITE

"It was not the intent of our Founding Fathers that the First Amendment be held in abeyance through one's adolescence. If the American newspaper establishment fails to defend free speech for high school and college journalists, how can we claim it for ourselves?"

William Hilliard, president and editor of the *Portland Oregonian*, in a Washington, D.C., speech in April before the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

VIOLENCE IN THE AIR

Why Do We Show This Stuff?

The debate over television's handling of violent news took an unusual turn in Seattle recently when the union representing the people who bring the city its TV news — reporters and anchors — began attacking what it calls "body-count journalism." The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists organized a public forum on TV news violence and talked two of the city's three news directors, Andy Beers of KING-TV and Bill Lord of KIRO-TV, into confronting a hostile audience of reporters and viewers who demanded less play — especially less promotional play — for violent crime stories.

"Random violence has become part of the scene in our community," Beers insisted. "We'd be dishonest not to cover it." But what about the violence on local newscasts that isn't local? responded professor Floyd McKay of Western Washington University, a member of the Seattle panel. "You borrow it by satellite from Miami, Detroit, or Los Angeles and show it repeatedly in Seattle." The Seattle forum coincided with a chorus of criticism elsewhere, some of it focusing on children. For example, half the children interviewed for a recent national study

commissioned by an Oakland, California, advocacy group called Children Now, said they felt angry, afraid, or sad after watching the news. When the organization hired professor Dale Kunkel of the University of California, Santa Barbara, to analyze child-related news on television, he found that nearly half the stories having to do with children dealt with crime and violence either against children or committed by children.

In Seattle, KIRO news director Bill Lord assigned Karen O'Leary to report on the AFTRA forum, and to examine — on the station's 5 P.M. newscast — KIRO's coverage of violence. Her report combined tape of the debate with some of KIRO's own crime-scene footage, and acknowledged public criticism of television's emphasis on violence.

Meanwhile, news executives in other markets have sensed a backlash against newscast violence among viewers, and responded accordingly. WCCO in Minneapolis and KXTV in Sacramento are among several stations that have made a commitment to minimize sensational crime and violence on their early evening newscasts, when children are most likely to watch.

"Not that we don't aggressively cover major crime stories," KXTV news director Mike Beardsley says, "but we don't show the graphic blood."

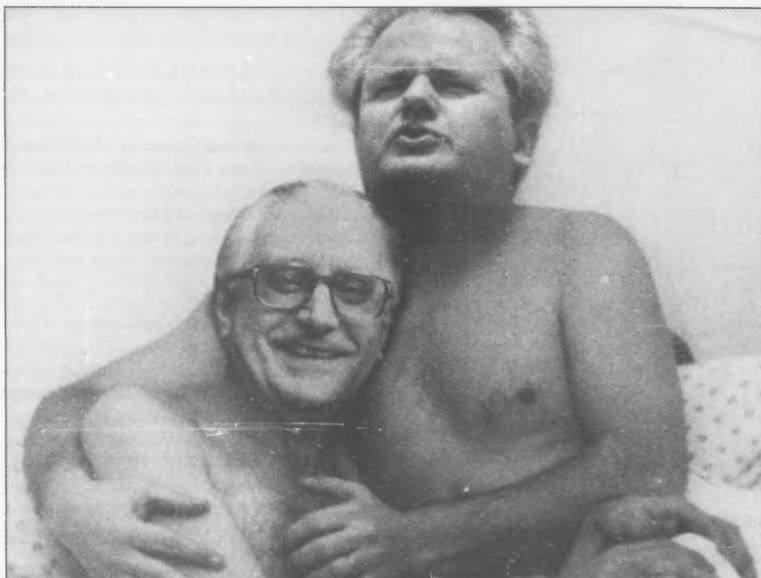
KIRO's Bill Lord says coverage is often a matter of manpower and money. "You're going to have to invest more time and staff in the more complicated issue stories," he observes. "We don't always have it."

By comparison, local crime stories are quick and easy, and some are obviously very compelling. Those borrowed by satellite from a city 3,000 miles away are even cheaper and easier.

So the debate over violence, at the Seattle forum and elsewhere, extends beyond what is covered to what is not. "Nobody is telling us [in Seattle TV news] about our schools, housing, and transportation problems," McKay complained. "All the public policy issues that used to be the major content of the news are pushed out by this preoccupation with blood."

Bob Simmons

Simmons is a Seattle-based free-lance writer and former political editor at KING-TV.



THE FERAL'S BITE

A Croatian Paper Pushes the Limit

Scattered across desks at the offices of the *Feral Tribune*, a satirical weekly in Split, Croatia, are copies of "the" photo — two men in bed, stripped to the waist, snuggling. The heads on the bodies are those of Croatia's president, Franjo Tudjman, and the Serbian strongman, Slobodan Milosevic. The trick photo, published in last December, skewered these two former archenemies for their perceived alliance against the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for figuratively hopping into bed. IS THIS WHAT WE FOUGHT FOR? asked the headline.

Shortly after this controversial artwork appeared, the *Feral Tribune's* editor-in-chief was drafted into the army, training for about a month with a Croatian army brigade that the paper had severely criticized.

But the government's displeasure has not blunted *Feral's* edge. This past March, after the Croats and Muslims signed a peace accord to end the fighting between them in central Bosnia, *Feral*

recreated the bedroom romp. This time, though, Tudjman was in bed with Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic. The headline below asked WHO IS NEXT?

Feral regularly pushes the limits of acceptability in its coverage of Croatia's political scene. Crude and often profane, the tabloid nonetheless manages to present biting and often thought-provoking commentary in a nation that is struggling — and sometimes failing spectacularly — to overcome the constraints of its communist past and embrace democracy. The paper stands out against the bland state-influenced mainstream media.

Feral — the word means lamp in a Croatian dialect — began as a satirical supplement to the once fiercely independent daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* (Free Dalmatia). But after that daily was privatized, *Feral* struck out on its own. It is surviving on brisk sales and support from the Soros Foundation, which funds newspapers and other democratic institutions in Eastern Europe.

How do they get away with it? The authorities, says deputy editor Boris Dezulovic, "don't know what to with *Feral*, because they hate what it says. But as long as it prints, [President] Tudjman can claim there is freedom of the press in Croatia."

Danica Kirka

Kirka is a free-lance writer based in Zagreb.

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RESOURCES

GETTING INTO PRISON

Talk about growth industries. With the highest rate of incarceration in the industrialized world, the U.S. now spends more than \$25 billion annually on its prisons and jails, nearly double what it spent a decade ago. If it were run by one company, the corrections industry could now make the top thirty on Forbes's 500 lists, right alongside Microsoft and PepsiCo.

It would probably get more press that way.

Monitoring our far-flung corrections system — over one million people in prison and millions more on parole — are only a handful of reporters. Those who try to cover prison issues run up against obstacles ranging from administrative red tape to lack of editorial interest, perhaps reflecting an unwillingness to humanize "bad" people. As one media critic put it, jails are just not as sexy as the crimes that put people there.

Still, some reporters do push through outstanding pieces, stories examining

SOUND BITE

“When I was sixteen, my parents were like the Washington press ... You just couldn't talk to them, because they kept dragging down the conversation to new depths of suspicion. They said, 'Just tell us the truth,' but the truth was complicated, and they had already made up their minds.

”

Garrison Keillor, host of the *A Prairie Home Companion* radio show on American Public Radio, in an April address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

.....
prison policies and thoughtfully exploring the combustible mix of despair, rage, and bureaucracy in the lives of men and women behind bars.

Here's a sample of the best from recent years, starting with a trio of in-depth series exposing the state of medi-

Inmate Naomi Ybanna, as pictured in *The Orange County Register*.



cal care in our prison systems, and including features and other pieces that reporters and editors looking to cover the penal world might want to check out.

“Care & Punishment: Medicine Behind Bars,” *The Dallas Morning News*, June 25-30, 1989. By Olive Talley. Talley exposes a critical shortage of doctors in Texas's seven federal prisons, and a trail of medical neglect, including botched surgeries, that has led to prisoners' deaths and disfigurement.

“Cruel and Unusual? Punishment,” *The Orange County Register*, July 29-31, 1990. By Kim Christensen, James Grimaldi, and Donna Wares. This series investigates abuses at Frontera, the nation's largest women's prison (“an upside-down world where a doctor's appointment is harder to come by than a day's fix of heroin ...”), including rape, drug trafficking, sex extortion, and medical neglect that resulted in at least five deaths in three years.

“Cruel & Unusual: The Failure of New York's Prison Medical System,” *The Syracuse, New York, Post-Standard*, August 10-14, 1992. By Todd Lighty, Matthew Cox, Alva James, and Tom Foster. The writers expose the flawed medical system that has helped make the New York prison system the nation's deadliest. The first article tells the story of Michael San Souci, an inmate in Attica prison so desperate to get medical attention after he started vomiting blood that he slashed his throat with a Bic razor.

“Shock Sisters: Female Convicts Tackle Boot Camp,” *The Village Voice*, May 22, 1990. By Jan Hoffman. With a group of female convicts, Hoffman journeys into the Summit Shock Incarceration Facility in Summit, New York, where the women endure six months of boot camp in exchange for parole. (“We break down their individualism and gradually rebuild their self-pride.”) Hoffman discusses the pros and cons of the controversial shock program, available to certain non-violent, first-time felony offenders between the ages of sixteen and nineteen.

“The Most Rehabilitated Prisoner in America,” *Life*, March 1993. By George Howe Colt and photographer John Loengard. Colt writes movingly about the life of Wilbert Rideau, an award-winning journalist and editor of the highly regarded prison magazine, *The Angolite*. Rideau is serving a life sentence in the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola for murdering a bank teller. Colt explores the reasons why, despite his accomplishments, Rideau has never been set free.

“The State of Michigan vs. Gary Fannon: A Tragic Miscarriage of Justice Continues,” *Rolling Stone*, September 2, 1993. By Mike Sager. This is Sager's second article for *Rolling Stone* about Gary Fannon, who is serving a life sentence without parole for delivering some cocaine when he was eighteen years old (the first piece ran in 1992). Sager's story critically examines the mandatory-minimum drug sentencing movement, which has put thousands of nonviolent small-time

drug offenders in prison for long periods, including some, like Fannon, for their natural lives.

"Punishment Without a Crime," WCVB-TV (Needham, Mass.), January 31-February 2, 1990. By Neil Ungerleider, Susan Wormick, and Jayne Raphael. This three-part series reports on an obscure Massachusetts law that sent innocent female alcoholics, some as young as seventeen, to the state's maximum security prison, which offers no treatment program.

"No Exit," *West the San Jose Mercury News's* weekend magazine, June 7, 1992. By Christopher Schmitt. Schmitt tackles the business of California's prison-building boom ("the only growth industry in state government") and considers what else, such as education, the billions spent on corrections could have bought. The article includes a Q&A segment with leading legal experts and crime specialists.

"Juveniles in Detention Centers Get Bedtime Reading," National Public Radio, August 15, 1993. By Liane Hansen. Hansen ventures into Contra Costa County Juvenile Hall, east of San Francisco, where three times a week volunteers read stories over the loudspeakers to inmates at bedtime. The inventor of the innovative program? An advertising executive — a mom who always reads to her boys before bedtime. The teen inmates say the readings, which range from Bo Jackson's autobiography to *Winnie the Pooh*, help them get to sleep and have even sparked interest in reading.

"Should Killers Live? Or Die?" *Good Housekeeping*, August 1993. By Helen Prejean. Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, describes her journey into death row in Louisiana where she befriended a convicted murderer, Patrick Sonnier. Prejean, present when Sonnier died in the electric chair, discusses the death penalty and her relationship with the family of Sonnier's victim.

"Nowhere to Run," *Pacific News Service*, January 19, 1994. By Dannie Martin. Convict-writer Dannie Martin describes his experience in prison during the Los Angeles earthquake. Martin wrote extensively about prison life for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. His published columns are collected in *Committing Journalism: the Prison Writings of Red Hog*, which Martin co-wrote with Peter Sussman, the former Sunday Punch section editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"In For Life," ABC News *Day One*, March 14, 1994. Producer, Paul Slavin. In the hands of prisoner (and *Angolite* editor) Wilbert Rideau and a fellow inmate, the television camera transcends prison walls (and conventional prison reporting) to capture the hope and perseverance of prisoners facing life and death inside Louisiana's maximum security penitentiary.

Jennifer Bjorhus

Bjorhus is a free-lance reporter living in Berkeley, California.

SOUND BITE

"Violent crime has become more newsworthy not because its incidence is increasing but because the news media have chosen to make it so. That decision is a legitimate one The wave of crime coverage on the news in the last six months represents a refusal to be inured to it any more.

”

The February 1994 issue of the *Tyndall Report*, which monitors the content of the weekday nightly newscasts of the three major networks.

ITALY'S NEW HALL OF MIRRORS Berlusconi's Media Cover Berlusconi

Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's new prime minister, is by all accounts a remarkable man, although what kind of remarkable is in dispute.

According to his supporters, he is a self-made broadcasting tycoon who took on Italy's state television monopoly and through risk, creativity, and hard work, broke the monopoly and built a \$6.25 billion business empire. When he saw Italy about to fall to the leftists in the wake of the huge corruption scandals that have virtually swept away Italy's political leadership, he simply stepped in to do his civic duty. After he won, he resigned as head of operations for Fininvest, his giant broadcasting, publishing, retailing, and finance corporate group.

His opponents see things differently.

In their view, Berlusconi — who started out as a real estate developer — wormed his way through a loophole in Italy's state broadcasting monopoly to build up an unparalleled position of his own: he now owns 47 percent of Italy's print and broadcast media, including nearly all the television industry not owned by the government. As his opponents see it, Berlusconi rose to that dizzying pinnacle of media power over the past twenty years through cutthroat ad-time deals, open violations of the feeble existing media laws, and ruthless power plays — involving former prime minister and political boss Bettino Craxi and his notoriously corrupt Socialist party — designed to prevent strong new media legislation.

While it has not been established that Craxi and Berlusconi connived to forestall antitrust legislation intended to reduce the extent of Fininvest's broadcasting monopoly, they were definitely close friends: they often vacationed together and Bettino Craxi and his wife, Anna, were godparents to two of Berlusconi's children, while Anna Craxi was maid of honor at Berlusconi's recent wedding to an actress.

With Craxi out of power and facing charges, Berlusconi stepped into the political vacuum last winter when he entered politics.

So neither supporters nor opponents were really surprised this spring when Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia (founded only three months earlier, and named after the supporters' slogan — Go, Italy — of Berlusconi's champion soccer team, A.C. Milan), triumphed at the first national elections to be held since the corruption scandals. They were even less surprised when Forza Italia formed a coalition government with two other right-wing parties, the populist and xenophobic Northern League and the neo-Fascist Alleanza Nazionale, the party that has received wide notice for the membership of Alessandra Mussolini, blood kin of both Benito Mussolini and Sophia Loren.

Berlusconi, of course, was named as prime minister. As prime minister, he will decide whether to respond to public pressure and pursue antitrust action against his own media empire. And, as prime minister, he will be greatly affected by the way that media empire covers

his political activity.

The week after Berlusconi's electoral victory, his flagship newsweekly *Panorama*, with 540,000 readers, ran a full-cover photograph of His Ownership looking warm and inspired and sincere and reassuring. The headline beneath the campaign-quality photo read, "How He Wants to Change Italy"; beneath it, in inch-high type, ran the name: Berlusconi.

Sergio Romano, Italian ambassador to the USSR in the middle and late '80s and a columnist for one of Berlusconi's news magazines, *Epoca*, says, "If Ted Turner were to run for president, the news staff of CNN would immediately face a major concern. They would be worried that the quality of their primary product — news — might be contaminated and compromised. Unfortunately, Italian journalism does not enjoy this sort of tradition. Italian journalism does not even consider this to be a problem. Italian journalists feel that they are at the service of their boss." According to Romano, with few exceptions, Berlusconi's television journalists have joined the chorus.

Ernesto Galli della Loggia, a respected political commentator, adds that "in any case, investigative journalism doesn't really exist in Italy." There is, he says, "a tradition that newspapers are at the service of politics. Opposition newspapers criticize, but they do not undertake investigations to uncover specific forms of behavior. These latest scandals were uncovered entirely by



investigating magistrates."

Ultimately, perhaps, it is the ownership of the media empire that is at issue more than its day-to-day use as a political tool.

Italy's generally toothless antitrust legislation requires Berlusconi to give up some of his media holdings. Now that he is prime minister, popular pressure for him to do so has greatly increased. Berlusconi is stalling for time — he has appointed three "wise men," two of whom are associated with his broadcasting empire, to ponder the matter and report back to him this fall. "I think he will do little if anything," says Galli della Loggia. "He might sell a network if, as many expect, state television also sells a network in return."

One of the unexpected angles of this debate comes from the nature of the Italian parliamentary system. As Sergio Romano points out, "The political parties can sweep him away in the blink of an eye." So, if he sells off his media holdings and then loses power, he could be left without his political and his business base. Romano thinks Berlusconi "will sell if he receives equal value in return." All of these decisions, of course, will be made under the watchful eye of Berlusconi's own news outlets.

"We have entered a land without maps or roads," Romano adds.

Antony Shugaar

Shugaar is a Brooklyn free-lancer who often writes about Italy.

FOLLOW-UP

THE BAN

When Karla Homolka came to trial last year in one of Canada's most horrific sex-crime cases, the judge prohibited reporters from publishing details (See "Silence of the Press," *CJR*, September/October 1993) in order to assure a fair trial for her ex-husband, who was to be tried later. Homolka was convicted of manslaughter in July 1993. The murder trial of her ex-husband, Paul Teale, began in May and formerly suppressed facts can now be made public, as they come up in testimony.

Meanwhile, the Homolka ban continues to highlight questions about freedom of the press in Canada, particularly the media's right to report on court proceedings. Several cases are being tested in the country's courts.

The ban forced cable operators to black out U.S. television news programs. Computer administrators censored Internet news that contained banned information. Black stickers were used to block out offending information in the April issue of *Wired* magazine, which was temporarily hauled off newsstands to comply with the ban. Nevertheless, a poll released late last year showed that 26 percent of Ontario residents and 14 percent of Canadians believed they knew banned details.

Enforcement of the ban was erratic. In November, police arrested more than fifty Canadians crossing the border with U.S. newspapers carrying a banned *Washington Post* article. No charges were filed. But when retired Ontario policeman Gordon Domm made a public demonstration of mailing copies of the *Post* article, he was charged with violating the ban. He was tried and found guilty in May, with sentencing set for June 30. On the other hand, when a small giveaway weekly in Victoria published details not long after Domm was arrested, there were no legal repercussions. And, while workers at the Edmonton Public Library ripped offending articles out of newspapers, their counterparts in Halifax, Regina, and at Montreal's McGill University made banned articles available.

Debby Waldman and Mary McIntosh

CJR INTERNSHIPS

Applications are now being accepted for the fall program. Interns will work closely with editors on a wide range of research, writing, and production projects. These positions are unsalaried, but interns will be paid at customary rates for any of their writing published in *CJR* during their tenure. Interns may be enrolled concurrently in a college or university; they may also be unaffiliated. Positions are both part- and full-time. Applicants should send a résumé, writing sample, two references, and a letter explaining their interest to: Gloria Cooper, Managing Editor, *CJR*, 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, for news judgment coming straight out of left field. On February 26, when news outlets all around the country were leading with the massacre in Hebron and following with Nancy Kerrigan's silver-medal triumph in Norway, the *Sentinel* centered its entire front page on the latest design proposals for the home team's new ballpark. Under the 72-point banner story headed **BREWERS WANT STADIUM WITH CONVERTIBLE ROOF** were two four-color photos of the arch-roof model, a bold-faced box of statistics and specs, and three hard pitches to pieces inside; there, readers were hit with four more sketches and drawings, six more columns and stories (sample headline: **SUPPORTING THIS PLAN IS NO BRAINER**), and an editorial that called the proposal "magnificent." Such loss of control may be tied to the fact that, as the *Sentinel's* P.M. sister, the *Milwaukee Journal*, reported the following day, the papers' parent company, Journal Communications, has pledged \$500,000 in tickets and marketing support to keep the team in Milwaukee; that the company has taken a ten-year, \$1 million lease on a luxury box; and that the newly appointed head of a commission charged with exploring ways of financing — including public financing — the Brewers' field of dreams is Robert Kahlor, chairman and chief executive officer of Journal Communications.

◆ **DART** to the *Daily Pilot* of Orange County, California, birthplace and burial place of Richard Nixon, for silencing a journalist who dared to point out that the emperor's new funeral clothes didn't fit. Following the April 26 publication of an irreverent piece by columnist Matt Coker, in which he reminded his readers of some of the former president's more ignominious contributions to his country and criticized his colleagues in the news media for their "teary-eyed eulogies to this wretched man," the *Pilot* informed Coker that his column would not be running at this — or any other — point in time. Coker's unsentimental words had aroused a storm of cancelled subscriptions, anonymous death threats, and an ad from a local restaurant that, in addition to a pitch for Mother's Day brunch, made one thing perfectly clear: "We feel Mr. Coker's editorial was distasteful and are appalled that the *Daily Pilot* decided to print it. Our advertising in this paper is in no way supportive of Mr. Coker's opinion."

◆ **LAUREL** to KDFW-TV, Dallas, and investigative reporter Brett Shipp, for "Your Tax Dollars At Rest," a periodic look at some of the less than noble purposes to which public monies are put. In one instructive series (February 28-March 2), Shipp followed board members and administrators of the financially strapped Dallas Independent School District to a three-day educational convention in San Francisco, where, contrary to what their falsified travel records claimed, most of the group spent most of the time shopping on Fisherman's Wharf, dining at five-star restaurants, and sightseeing in luxury rental sedans miles across the bay. (Total cost to taxpayers: ten grand.) KDFW's lesson to the DISD board (which hastily put new travel guidelines into effect) was evidently lost on nearby Grand Prairie: representatives of that school district who ran up \$8,000 in bills at an April convention of the National School Boards Association in New Orleans found themselves captured on Shipp's hidden camera in similarly compromising positions, partying in the French Quarter and trying their luck at a riverboat casino. At last report, the Dallas County district attorney was reviewing a state audit of the district as well as the KDFW series, and studying them hard.

◆ **DART** to *Editor & Publisher* magazine, and to the University of California at Los Angeles, for shaking hands with journalistic devils. Included in *E & P's* special forty-page pullout section on "Telecommunications and Interactive Newspapers" — published by its advertising department but presented under the *E & P* logo — was an article, surrounded by related ads, on the financial joys that newspapers might reap by producing TV infomercials. UCLA, for its part, put out a spring catalog of extension offerings in which its course in the production of documentary segments for TV newsmagazines was listed under the category of "Entertainment Studies and Performing Arts."

◆ **DART** to the Burlington, Vermont, *Free Press*, for an act of professional treason. Subverting the press's historical resistance to encroachments on its freedoms in any form, the Gannett-owned *Free Press* went to court on February 18 to ask that a gag order be imposed in connection with a lawsuit against itself. (The suit had been brought by city hall reporter Paul

Teetor, who claimed that he was wrongfully dismissed in 1993 for his impolitic coverage of a mayor's forum on race relations; Teetor's report — which noted that a white woman in the audience, rising to remark on the negative focus of the forum, was silenced by a black mayoral aide and "escorted" swiftly out — had drawn fire from the black community.) This winter, as the legal process of discovery got under way, Peter Freyne, a columnist for the competing *Vermont Times*, lost no time in reporting hitherto private facts about *Free Press* policies, profits, and personnel. The *Free Press*, in turn, lost no time in seeking protection from the court. The court, for its part, gave Gannett an instructive lecture on the First Amendment. "When defendants' only support for their requested gag is the existence of a newspaper article," wrote Judge Matthew Katz, "the question becomes immediately apparent whether, in the context of civil litigation, this court is being, in effect, requested to prevent newspaper coverage." The request was denied.

◆ **LAUREL** to Terry Francke, executive director of the California First Amendment Coalition, for letting the sun shine in. As a lawyer available free of charge twenty-four hours a day (You say you're covering a pre-dawn plane crash and the cops won't let you on the runway? Just call Francke); as the publisher of a newsletter beaming in on right-to-know issues around the state (current project push: reform of the California Public Records Act); and, above all, as the primary force behind the sweeping changes in the thirty-year-old open meetings law that took effect on April 1 (by which secret votes and out-of-town gatherings of public bodies are finally banned), Francke is, by all accounts, one of the best friends California journalists have ever had.

◆ **DART** to the Nashville *Tennessean* and sportswriter Larry Woody, for failing to hold that line. Having kicked off a TV tour to promote his new book on the life and death of a college football player, Woody further advanced to his goal with an April 14 column on the difficulty of writing and promoting such a "heart-warming and heart-rending" story. Even the column's headline made an extra self-serving point: THIS STORY JUST NEEDED TO BE TOLD.

◆ **DART** to *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and to the Suburban Journals company of St. Louis, Missouri, for redefining the coverage of bread-and-butter issues. In a page-one, above-the-fold story on January 15, the *Enquirer* gave top priority to the announcement by the Kroger grocery chain, a major advertiser, of a new promotion that would enable shoppers to earn discounts on air fares for certain Delta flights originating in the

area; specific details were highlighted in an accompanying (also above-the-fold) box. Similarly, Suburban Journals deemed it worthy of page-one (but below-the-fold) play when the Shop 'n Save supermarkets upped their ad pages in the papers' food sections. "Shop 'n Save offers consumers the lowest everyday prices on over 30,000 brand name and private label products," the piece went on to quote S 'n S's c.e.o. as saying, "plus garden-fresh produce, a complete line of meat including USDA choice beef, and fresh seafood. Other departments include a full-service deli shop, oven-fresh bakery, and a family video center."

◆ **LAUREL** to the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, *Herald*, for "Of Money and Medicine," a nonroutine examination of the financial fitness of New Hampshire hospitals — and of the aggressive techniques practiced by some of them to keep their bottom lines in shape. Undertaken ten years after the controversial sale of the nonprofit Portsmouth Hospital to the Hospital Corporation of America, the *Herald's* series (beginning February 13) revealed a number of startling facts — most notably, that the highly profitable Portsmouth facility spends a lower percentage of its revenues on free care for poor patients than do its smaller, nonprofit counterparts, and that it is quicker than any of them in seeking liens against the homes of patients who lack the means to pay their bills. The series also revealed that the Foundation for Seacoast Health, a watchdog group created at the time of the HCA purchase and charged with protecting the interests of the community, appeared to have fallen into a state of almost total paralysis. The paper's probe produced a rash of cancelled contracts for medical ads and cancelled subscriptions, many from hospital employees whose pay envelopes were stuffed with subscription forms for a competing paper. Whether the probe will help to cure the hospital's hard-heartedness remains to be seen.

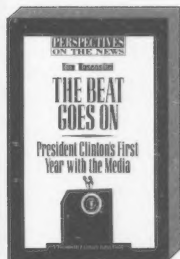
◆ **DART** to Leslie Brenner, free-lance travel writer for *Avenue* magazine. Apparently intoxicated by the color, flavor, and texture of a Chris Davis feature on a Cognac, France, film festival that ran in the Orlando *Sun-Sentinel* last November 14, Brenner seems to have siphoned off substantial portions for her own piece on the very same subject in *Avenue's* February issue. Some of the similarities of word and phrase can perhaps be explained by extreme coincidence — but is it not a strain to believe that both writers found themselves seated at the cinema next to Catherine Deneuve?

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.

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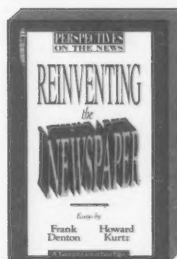
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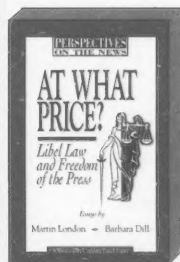


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Local Hero

The Man Who Helped Invent
Local Television Journalism
Struggles to Uphold Its Standards
by Mike Hoyt



For forty years, TV newsman Gabe Pressman has been passionately pursuing city stories

To move through New York City with television reporter Gabe Pressman is to experience the megalopolis as a small town. "Hiya, Gabe," says a doorman. "Hey, Gabe," says a taxi driver. "Hello, Gabe," says Rudy Giuliani, the eighth mayor that Pressman has covered so far. "Hi. Howareya," Pressman says. After forty years on TV, he and New York are on a first-name basis.

Back in 1954 Dwight Eisenhower was outlining the "domino theory" of communist expansion, Elvis Presley was cutting his first commercial record, and the Dow was finally breaking 400. "Three Coins in the Fountain" was on the radio and *Rear Window*

on the silver screen. Also in 1954, Pressman was helping to invent local broadcast journalism. He was, in fact, the first broadcaster in New York to take his microphone outside the studio to cover stories on the street. And there he remains.

Local broadcast journalism, of course, has mutated wildly over forty years, and so have its values. Pressman and TV journalists like him — those still trying to make solid television stories out of complicated and controversial community issues — remain loyal to its flickering core. "It's hard to defend the body-bag end of it. It's hard to defend the sleaze and sensationalism," he says. "But occasionally we have these little gems ..."

8:30 A.M.

Gabe Pressman is nervous. He is covering a mid-May conference about city health care reform —

Mike Hoyt is associate editor of CJR.

Pressman, says a colleague, "knows that something has happened today because something happened yesterday"

an important story, but complex and nonvisual. He has only himself to blame, since the night before he had talked his desk into letting him check this out. The fact that the city hall press corps is ignoring the affair is not easing Pressman's mind, and his only television competition at the event is from New York 1, the ubiquitous cable channel that covers just about everything (see "New York 1: Upstart in the Big Apple," January/February). "This is a *New York Times* story," Pressman grumbles. "It's not even a *Daily News* story."

He scans the crowd of policy wonks at the prestigious New York Academy of Medicine, on Fifth Avenue, and sips his decaf coffee, looking glum.

Pressman will never be mistaken for Peter Jennings. He is seventy years old and short, his hair combed flat in the Wildroot Creme Oil style of about 1958. His face is somewhere between Peter Lorre and a bulldog. *The Atlantic Monthly* once described him as "the Human Trenchcoat," and today he's wearing a big one, its multiple pockets stuffed with pens and notebooks, two pairs of glasses, a portable telephone, a book of phone numbers, and an electronic pager that he periodically pulls out and checks. Under the trenchcoat is a blue suit that is draped somewhat

cost-cutting experiment. His opponents fear that the privatized hospitals would avoid serving the city's sickest and poorest in order to insure a profit.

"What does privatization mean for the poor?" Pressman asks the city official.

"Well, for a while, it means that things will get worse for them," the official says. "It depends on the economy." He elaborates, then hastens to add: "I'm just telling you this because of our friendship. If this was part of your story ..."

"Your ass would be in a sling, right?" Pressman says.

"Right," says the official.

Pressman heads off to work the phones, striding like a man on a mission.

Pressman's father, a Bronx dentist who would rather have been a magician, once rigged up a microphone in the family bathroom so that nine-year-old Gabe could broadcast imaginary baseball to the living room. He always liked microphones, he says; but he always liked newspapers too. By 1949, after a three-year stint in the Navy, followed by journalism school, more than a year free-lancing in Europe, and a cup of coffee or two in newsrooms around New York and New Jersey, Pressman was working in the city hall bureau of the *New York World-Telegram*.

"But I was still captivated by the microphone," he recalls, and he was always ready to take part in reporters' roundtable shows. These, in turn, led to a side job: putting together an audio report on how the week had gone for the mayor of New York — Robert Wagner at the time — for a regular slot on one of Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenburg's radio news-and-chat shows. So as he covered city hall for the *Telegram*, Pressman lugged around a hand-cranked tape recorder, twenty pounds or so, and "for \$50 a week I spent Saturday and Sunday editing the audiotape that I had collected. On Monday morning, Tex and Jinx would say, 'Well, Gabe, what kind of week did the mayor have?' And I would tell them, 'Well, he pigeon-proofed city hall.' I'd have the sounds of pigeons, from some pet shop, in the background."

In 1954, WRCA radio and WRCA-TV, which later would become WNBC and WNBC-TV, began looking for someone "to run around town and collect 'actualities,' whatever that meant," Pressman says, for the station's newscasts. Pressman was offered the job and took it, despite misgivings about leaving print. The following year he began his move over to television, roving the city in a Chevy wagon. The station had "a kind of desk for coordination purposes, but the guy didn't know what to do with me. So I'd go in and say, 'What's going on, Bill?' and he'd say, 'Nothin', it's dead.' And I'd look at the wires and see an international financier, strangled in his apartment, and I'd say, 'My God,



Even as a print reporter in the early 1950s, Pressman carried a big tape recorder to put together a Monday morning radio report on the mayor's week

awkwardly over his fireplug frame. Pressman is not known for sartorial splendor. "A guy we worked with used to shout, 'Hey, Gabe, do they sell clothes where you got that suit?'" says a former colleague at Pressman's station, WNBC-TV, the NBC owned and operated Channel 4.

Pressman shakes a few hands, including that of a high municipal official whom he questions about his chosen angle for today — the possible conversion of some of the city's public hospitals into private institutions, a controversial issue. New York runs twenty-two medical institutions and, since they serve legions of people without health insurance, the losses are staggering. The mayor wants to let corporations run a handful of those institutions as a

how long have you had *this*?"

Some print reporters were not pleased with Pressman and the other TV news people who were starting to pop up at news events around the city. There was a sense that the TV types were using the print tribe as "actors" in their little film dramas. Then there was their bulky equipment and their sharp-elbowed crews.

Judith Crist, a reporter for *The New York Herald Tribune* before she became a film critic, remembers getting so irritated when a long-delayed press conference was being further delayed by Pressman and his ponderous equipment that "I kicked out the plug for his camera." Later that evening, she says, at a city hall press function, Pressman spotted her, came roaring toward her "and hauled off and was about to hit me when my husband and another reporter leaped in between us. One of the two took the punch in his back." Pressman says the story is apocryphal. "I never took a swing at anybody in my career," he says, "man or woman."

Still, it has never been advisable to become an obstacle to a Gabe Pressman TV story. During the last presidential campaign, when NBC's *Today Show* had managed to get an interview with Ross Perot, Pressman and Robert Windrem, a producer for *NBC Nightly News*, waited to speak with the candidate afterwards. "Some twenty-five-year-old from *Today*" came out and told Pressman that Perot would not be talking to him, recalls Windrem.

"Pressman just exploded," Windrem says. "He was yelling, 'I've been working in this building thirty years. This is my building.' It was like watching a volcano. It was wonderful."

Pressman got the interview with Perot, as Windrem recalls — a local exclusive.

11:30 A.M.

Gabe Pressman is restless. Somebody at the health care conference is droning on about "Facilitating a Primary Care Infrastructure." Pressman has already sold his story, via speakerphone, to the morning assignment meeting back at WNBC. "I said there was not a lot of press attention," Pressman recounts, "but that the mayor is here all fucking day, and that he made a rather passionate, for him, speech, deriding HHC [the city's Health and Hospitals Corporation] and talking about the glories of privatization, and I said that I think it's a story. They said okay. They asked me why I was still on the phone, arguing."

Finally, there is a break in the health conference, and Pressman meets the tall, grim-faced mayor, Rudy Giuliani, in a side room and quickly zeroes in on the question of privatization and the poor.

The poor, the mayor says, are badly served under the *current* system. "Privatization isn't the only answer," he says, "but it should be consid-

ered." The mayor adds that New York cannot afford the kind of "orthodoxy" that doesn't allow for "experimentation and new ideas."

Pressman later worries that the mayor seemed cool. "I think Giuliani sees the press as very resistant to change," he tells me. "Every mayor is upset with the press; I think this guy even sooner than usual. He started with such a bang, and he's encountered more severe questioning." (If Giuliani finds Pressman hostile to his policies, he's not the first to do so. Former mayor Ed Koch, for example, pays Pressman a left-handed compliment: "I



A young Gabe Pressman gets the scoop from a young Marilyn Monroe

think Gabe often became an advocate of a policy that I didn't agree with. But if you see him as a columnist, it's *okay*. I think Gabe always saw himself as a reporter, but I always saw him as a columnist.")

Back out in the sunlight, Pressman and his crew deliver the morning's tapes to an NBC courier, who will hustle them back to WNBC's Rockefeller Center editing room so that producer Inara de Leon can begin screening them. Pressman's contract mandates that, unlike most reporters at Channel 4, he has his own producer. De Leon, he says, is a "very, very good" one. The two of them have just finished a series of stories about police brutality that Pressman seems particularly proud of. "I'm not sure the station is that hot on it, as a story, but we keep slipping it in there," he says.

Pressman steers his big maroon Crown Victoria across the East River to Queens, heading for one of those city hospitals thought to be a candidate for privatization.

Ten years ago, on the thirtieth anniversary of Pressman's arrival at WNBC, his colleagues prepared a short tape covering his career. It shows scenes from the steady parade of history that has passed in front of his microphone — from Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., to Nelson Rockefeller to Gary

Hart, Eleanor Roosevelt to Bella Abzug to Geraldine Ferraro. Here is Pressman on an early-morning walk with Harry Truman, his camera person standing on a hand truck that is being pulled by a third man. Here he is on *News Forum*, the politics-and-policy interview show that he hosts every Sunday. Here he is being knocked flat, on-camera, by a Canadian economist. ("What is your name? *What is your name?*" he screams at the economist.) And here he is asking the Beatles if they think that they'll lose their strength if they cut their hair. "Dunno," says John Lennon.

By the time of the Beatles, local television news had exploded in New York, thanks in part to a long newspaper strike in late 1962 and early 1963, when a number of stations expanded their fifteen-minute newscasts to half an hour. The tape, of course, doesn't tell much about all the ways local TV news has altered during Pressman's time, years when a number of factors — including corporate takeovers, deregulation, and increasing reliance on consultants — combined to deemphasize public service journalism in pursuit of ratings and higher profits. Politics and public affairs reporting, Pressman's passion, was often a casualty.

In 1972, struggling at the bottom of the ratings, a desperate WNBC management had begun altering the news format, bringing in small talk by the on-camera folk, a set full of armchairs, and a new anchor, Carl Stokes, a former mayor of Cleveland who had zero previous news experience. Pressman quit. "I believe strongly in hard news coverage as the essence of television journalism," he wrote in his letter of resignation. "I believe, too, in the need for more profound investigative reporting. I do not believe that NBC is the best milieu for the kind of local journalism that I think the times call for."

But after eight years at rival WNEW, Channel 5, he was back at WNBC, the first person hired by Al Jerome, who became general manager of the station in 1980. In his job interview, Jerome recalls, he told NBC executives that he "wanted to establish a reporters' shop, with reporters known for completeness and credibility. I wanted people who cared about the city and knew it, and knew how to navigate the obstacles to getting the story." Jerome, now the president and c.e.o. of SpectraVision, Inc., a Texas company that supplies pay-per-view movies to the hotel industry, told the executives that he wanted to hire "somebody like Gabe Pressman." One of his interviewers, Jerome recalls, mentioned that the genuine article was available, that Pressman's Channel 5 contract was up. So Jerome lured Pressman back to the station at which he had spent seventeen years. "I wanted to send a signal," he says.

So did Pressman, who was eager to go back to WNBC and "show them what I could do." In this period, Pressman did some half-hour news specials

that he still likes to show, including "To Bear Witness" in 1981, a visit to a meeting of Holocaust survivors in Israel, and "Asylum in the Streets" in 1983, a look at the "de-institutionalization" of the mentally ill and the resulting tide of homeless people on New York's streets. The eighties turned out to be glory years for WNBC. Viewers took to the serious approach; ratings were high and the station won five Emmy awards in a row.

2:00 P.M.

Gabe Pressman is elated. "It really is quite a contrast," he tells his camera crew. "All the stuffed shirts sitting there pontificating and then you come out here and talk to some people who work for a living, and to a patient. And she understands it right away. It's a great story. It came out a lot better than I thought."

Management at Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens hadn't let his cameras into their building, but the union shop steward, a nurse's aide named Eileen Steele, had brought some twenty workers down to the sidewalk. Best of all, from Pressman's point of view, had been the patient, a gold-toothed woman named Betty Jeanne Roberts, who had rolled her wheelchair into the interview and asked what was going on. When Pressman asked Roberts about the idea of Elmhurst being turned into a for-profit hospital, she produced an eloquent set of sound bites, quotes that Pressman knew would balance out the mayor's point of view.

Roberts said she was a seamstress, but had been injured in a fall that had cost her so much muscle strength in her legs that she could no longer push the pedals. She travels quite a distance to Elmhurst, she said, where she receives regular treatments despite her inability to pay.

"If you're sick," she explains to Pressman and his camera, "they take care of you."

On the way back to the city Pressman calls the producer of the 6 P.M. news show, Diane Doctor, describes his success at Elmhurst, and asks if he can "chisel out fifteen more seconds."

"Okay," Doctor says. "Two minutes." Pressman smiles.

"You've got to have time for the give-and-take, or else you just have the take," he tells me. "We're fighting our way, as an industry, out of this consultant-decreed abyss of one-minute, thirty-second spots. We were battling against one thirty a year ago. Now we're at one forty-five, trying to get two."

In May, Pressman squeezed his coverage of Mayor Giuliani's first New York City budget, which signaled a major change in governmental philosophy and which print reporters would analyze for days — into about two minutes on the 6 P.M. newscast and a minute and forty seconds on the more popular 11 P.M. show. There it followed



BRUCE CURTIS FROM VIDEO

Pressman with hizzoner, Mayor Robert Wagner, and with his majesty, the king of rock 'n' roll

a lead piece about a high school track team manager hit in the head by a javelin, a piece about a man who shot himself to death after wounding his young son, a "tale of torture" about a fourteen-year-old girl "held hostage" by a family friend after the friend had some sort of breakdown, and a funeral for a hero fireman.

At WNBC, the early nineties seem to be echoing the early seventies, with the station shifting away from substantive stories to the short and sensational. Solid veterans complain that they are being pushed out. "Channel 4 is a miserable place," *Newsday* television writer Verne Gay wrote in the fall of 1992, about the era that had begun with the arrival of general manager Bill Bolster in 1991. "Staffers say morale is as low as it's ever been and that it is getting worse." A number of respected producers and reporters have jumped ship, including David Diaz, who quit after fifteen years, telling the press that he wanted to remember the station as "a class operation."

"There's a kind of lack of concern about the issues [at WNBC]," says Diaz, now working for rival WCBS. "They think that anything to do with public policy is boring. So people who are interested in that are sort of guilty by association."

This may be why, at the end of 1993 when Pressman's contract was running out, the chances of its renewal did not look good. "I would have bet money that they were going to let him go, and Gabe believed that it was very unlikely that he was going to remain there after the end of his contract," says a journalist who knows WNBC well. Channel 4, he says, had become "a station with a small core of staff reporters and a whole lot of free-lancers."

But, perhaps because Pressman received a couple of other offers, or perhaps because somebody realized he is an institution, the negotiations turned friendlier early this year. In February, Pressman signed a new contract that he describes only as "long-term." Others say that the contract defines "long-term" as "lifetime" — making Pressman a New York television newsmen for the rest of his days. Some TV reporters in town regard Pressman's rehiring as a good omen for their industry. "Maybe with a Gabe Pressman in there," says one, "we'll beat the bastards yet."

3:30 P.M.

Gabe Pressman is nervous, again. He's back in his cluttered office, and Inara de Leon is telling him that the quality of the lighting in the interview with the mayor is not good. He can't imagine eliminating the mayor. Then she sends a computer message with a note of panic in it. The interviews at the hospital have a "tracking problem," which Pressman understands to mean that you can't hear what the people are saying. DeLeon and an engineer will

attempt to re-dub the videotapes on a more sensitive machine, but this will eat up editing time.

Hoping for the best, Pressman eats a grilled cheese sandwich and starts to write his script.

He is not particularly eloquent, not particularly smooth, not particularly pretty. Why does Pressman survive?

It's the quality of his questions, says Murray Kempton, the dean of the city's print columnists, who, at age seventy-six, describes himself as Pressman's oldest companion on the street. "He gets more depth into his questions than I've ever seen anybody in the city get."

It's doggedness, says Mary Civiello, a respected veteran at WNBC. "He's indefatigable. He's relentless, and he works all hours. People half his age, he leaves them in the dust."

It's passion, says Jerry Nachman, who was news director at WNBC from 1984 to 1986. "In a world of cynics and burnouts, he came to work angry every day."

It's a sense of history, says Bob Liff, who covers city hall for *New York Newsday*. "He knows that something has happened today because something happened yesterday."

It's that he's always there, says Gail Collins, a *Newsday* political columnist. "At some point along the way he went from being a reporter to being an institution. I guess I feel like the rest of the people: I see Gabe Pressman and I get a sense of assurance."

5:55 P.M.

DeLeon and engineer Steven Giuliano have saved the bad tape and then, working very quickly, pushing buttons on what looks like a big electronic organ, they have chosen the sound bites to go with Pressman's recorded script — the mayor, the workers, the patient in the wheelchair — and stuck them into the piece. Pressman is viewing it, and he seems satisfied, except for one thing. "You can't see her wheelchair," he says of Betty Jeanne Roberts, the patient he interviewed. Steve Giuliano exhales softly, then sprints down the hall, quickly re-dubs the wheelchair shot, and sprints back so that deLeon can put it into the story. He pulls the cassette out of his big machine at exactly the moment that a nervous-looking producer comes looking for it.

6:07 p.m.

The story runs, a one-minute and fifty-five-second piece. It closes with a shot of Pressman rising up to his full five-foot-seven and saying into the camera: "The mayor insists his proposal will help the poor. But Betty Jeanne Roberts says she wishes the mayor would talk to her. Gabe Pressman, News Four, Elmhurst." ♦

"Local TV journalism is still the only game in town. We're practicing journalism that gets information to the average person."



Mike Quill, the legendary New York leader of the transit workers' union, tears up a judicial no-strike order, as Pressman gets the story



Covering the New World Disorder

The Press Rushes in Where Clinton Fears to Tread

by Leon Hadar

American journalists can hardly be expected to admit being nostalgic for the good old cold-war days when covering the world meant finding out who won and who lost the latest global match between Washington and Moscow. But things were a lot simpler back then. Journalists took their cue from the president, who set the foreign policy agenda and used his favorite columnists to send trial balloons to foreign leaders. News organizations fol-

Leon Hadar teaches international relations and communications at The American University in Washington, D.C.



This Pulitzer Prize-winning photo of a starving Sudanese child, taken by free-lance Kevin Carter and published by *The New York Times*, addresses one of the many post-cold-war problems today's journalists are called upon to cover

lowed the Marines to wars and located their bureaus in those foreign capitals with the largest U.S. diplomatic presence. Only when cracks showed up in the national consensus, as it did during the Vietnam War, did the press dissent from the official line. As John Walcott, who covered the superpower rivalry for *Newsweek* and *The Wall Street Journal*, puts it, "The cold war provided us with a coherent global road map, in terms of what to cover and how to cover it."

But no more. "Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the elimination of the cold-war news filter, the task of making sense of global events has become less manageable for the media," says Don Oberdorfer, who served as a diplomatic corre-

spondent for *The Washington Post*. The press is unaccustomed to reacting to a world full of conflicts and violent encounters that, as historian and diplomat George Kennan puts it, offer no "great and all-absorbing focal points for American policy." Predictability has given way to uncertainty: Now what are we going to do?

"If ten years ago Armenia and Azerbaijan had been at war as they are now, it would have been a daily front-page story, seeing the Soviet Union being torn asunder," wrote Bernard Gwertzman, foreign editor of *The New York Times*, in a memo to his staff in December 1992. "Now, we are struggling to come up with a formula for covering that war as well as the other local conflicts in what

One reporter compares journalists covering post-cold-war conflicts to "scouts without compasses in a completely unknown terrain"

used to be the Soviet Union."

In the cold-war mindset, Sylvia Poggioli, an award-winning National Public Radio reporter, observed in a recent Nieman report, "good and evil were easily defined and identified." When it ended, "reporters had to confront new problems that most of them had never explored before, such as ethnic self-assertion, tribalism, religious conflicts, and the rights and limits to self-determination." Poggioli compared journalists covering post-cold-war conflicts to "scouts without compasses in a completely unknown terrain."

And the current White House occupant, unlike the cold-war presidents, has so far been unable to provide the press with a foreign policy compass. Instead, says Bill Maynes, editor of *Foreign Policy*, he "has abdicated the diplomatic news agenda-setting role of the presidency to the media."

The clear mandate given by a post-cold-war electorate to focus on domestic rather than foreign issues compounds the problem. "We assumed during the cold war that there was a secure market for international news," says Allen Alter, foreign editor for *The CBS Evening News*. "Now, it's difficult to figure out who our clients are and what foreign stories they want, if any." Even big stories, like the coup against Yeltsin, have failed to attract large audiences, according to CNN vice-president for public relations Steve Haworth.

It is all too easy to overemphasize the problems created — for journalists and diplomats alike — by the collapse of the old, simplistic view of the world. Among the possible journalistic benefits is the emergence of more nuanced and objective coverage. *Harper's Magazine* publisher John R. MacArthur for one, believes that cold-war lenses all too often blocked the journalist's view of international issues so that, for example, developing countries were portrayed as mere pawns in the cold-war struggle. The social roots of third world conflicts were rarely explored.

It was also more difficult to convince editors to pay attention to the economic rise of Asia or to trade issues anywhere, says James Fallows, who covered those issues for *The Atlantic Monthly* at a time when the press at large was preoccupied with the Soviet-American conflict. Now, Fallows says, he senses a growing interest in geo-economic news.

At *The New York Times*, says Gwertzman, "We have been quietly and not so quietly urging more and more stories on economic affairs for the foreign report. Every correspondent must make a major effort to become literate in economic affairs, to be able to write about macroeconomic trends such as monetary policies, as well as on micro stories such as new business in former communist states."

The fact that the *Times* chose former Middle East correspondent (and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner) Thomas L. Friedman to cover global trade and finance reflects this new commitment. "A few years ago, selecting someone with my background to cover trade would have been considered a demotion," says Friedman. "Now, in the era of geo-economics, covering trade wars is becoming as important as covering 'real' wars."

At *The Washington Post*, David Ignatius, also a former Middle East correspondent, is revamping the business section so that it will reflect the newly perceived need to coordinate the international coverage between the foreign and business desks. "At a time when what [investor] George Soros does is as important as what the Fed's Alan Greenspan decides, our foreign coverage is still focused too much on government policy and not enough on the market forces," Ignatius says.

While the *Times's* Gwertzman emphasizes the "need to demystify global economic news the way we de-jargonized nuclear-strategic news during the cold war," Alan Tonelson, research director at the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Strategy Institute, worries that the press will simply substitute "a dogmatic 'free-trade-is-good' bias" for its dogmatic cold-war bias. If it does so, Tonelson warns, the press could easily lose sight of the "losers" in the global economic story, be it American steel workers or Indians in Chiapas.

While the *Times* and *Post* search for new ways of covering international news, other media organizations, including the television networks, have been slow to take up the challenge. "We are just continuing to cover the world in the most comprehensive way, as we always did," says John Stack, foreign news director for NBC News. "There was no need for a post-cold-war reassessment." Ralph Begleiter, world affairs correspondent for CNN, says that,

while he finds that he is paying less attention to arms control issues and more to Russian ethnic politics, "that has not been a result of a systematic or structural post-cold-war restructuring of news process," adding that the network has not instigated any thorough discussion of the issue.

CBS's Alter, for his part, says, "We are changing all the time, responding to global developments. But we haven't made dramatic transformation of the way we cover the news, as a result of the end of the cold war, like changing the bureau system."

Meanwhile, over at ABC, senior vice-president Richard Wald says that "with the end of the cold war, we came to the conclusion that our coverage of international affairs would become less centered on the East-West conflict and more diffused, in terms of having to shift coverage from one area of the world to another." The network, he notes, has made an effort to provide its global newsgathering with more "flexibility" through an alliance with two major international broadcasting organizations — the BBC and Japan's NHK.

Financial constraints, combined with the conventional wisdom that the public is now less interested in foreign affairs, have led to increasingly severe cutbacks at the networks' foreign bureaus and a growing reliance on free-lance video footage. "In tandem, the global reach of both the United States government and the newsgathering resources of the American broadcast networks have shrunk," observes Andrew Tyndall, publisher of the *Tyndall Report*, a newsletter that monitors network television coverage. "In our domestic president, Bill Clinton, our news organizations have found an ideological soul mate."

While Tyndall's analysis suggests that Bosnia and Somalia have not been entirely pushed aside on the tube by tabloid stories, a whole middle tier of stories of some significance to U.S. interests — Japanese politics, the rise of radical Islam in the Middle East, political and economic upheavals in Ukraine and Poland, to name a few — was uncovered.

Coverage of Bosnia is a good example of the lack of an informed filter, argues NPR's Sylvia Poggioli. News judgments, she says, were based

on such factors as access to certain geographical areas (hence the focus on Bosnia rather than on the bloodier war in Nagorno-Karabakh; on Sarajevo, but not Tuzla); on the successful public relations efforts by certain players (the Croats and the Muslims); and on personal sympathies of journalists (sympathetic toward the westernized Muslims of Sarajevo).

What was missing from the reporting from Bosnia, Poggioli contends, was a realistic picture of its "complex cultural, historical, and political geography." What American viewers were given, then, was a simplified cold-warlike story, with heroes (the suffering residents of Sarajevo) and villains (the murderous Serbs).

In an op-ed piece that appeared in the June 7, 1990, *Wall Street Journal*, neoconservative pundit Irving Kristol recommended that *The New York Times* should relegate foreign news to its back pages. With the cold war over, he argued, there was no reason why a coup in Liberia "should even be within the purview of American foreign policy — or why the *Times* should be devoting so much space to it."

Cold war or no cold war, came the reply from the *Times* in an editorial three days later, the newspaper was committed to international news. "Is foreign coverage still important to the *Times*?" asked Gwertzman in his memo. "The answer is an unambiguous yes," he responded, while admitting the need for a new "formula" to determine which foreign news stories are now "significant."

But one person's significant is, of course, another's insignificant. While isolationists like Kristol are proposing a more restrictive definition of American interests in the world, others would like to see more coverage of "transnational" global issues, like human rights, the environment, and AIDS. In short, the debate over foreign news choices mirrors the debate over foreign policy alternatives. In the end, journalists cannot determine what the new foreign policy paradigm will be. A consensus will have to develop through a dialogue between the American people and their leaders. It is a dialogue which the media could — and should — help to facilitate. Like the debate over the role of America in the world, the debate over the future of American news coverage of that world has just begun. ♦

While the *Times* and the *Post* search for new ways of covering international news, the TV networks have been slow to take up the challenge

The Once (and Future?) *Independent*

London's youngest
and most promising daily
falls on hard times

by D.D. Guttenplan

“It is not the English habit, as a rule, to accord distinction to journalists,” says a woman in John Le Carré’s novel *The Honourable Schoolboy*. Or to newspapers, she might have added. When Jerry Westerby, the reporter who is the novel’s “school-boy” hero, mentions the London newspaper he writes for, he always calls it “the comic.”

From the moment it was launched in October 1986, *The Independent* served notice that English habits were about to change. With its weighty, elegant typography and its big, crisp front-page photographs, *The Independent* was a strikingly beautiful broadsheet newspaper. And the writing was every bit as good as the wrapping. Deft, authoritative reporting on the news pages; witty, unashamedly literate reviews and features; meaty sports coverage; and enough in-depth business journalism to draw young ABC1 readers (Britspeak for yuppies) in droves. Reporters at *The Independent* never, ever, call their paper “the comic.”

Starting from a low of about 260,000 in January 1987, the paper’s circulation began a fairly steady — and sometimes spectacular — climb, to the heady days of April 1992 when daily sales averaged 390,000 copies — 4,000 more than *The Times* of London. But by this January, *The Independent* had lost almost 100,000 in circulation. By May it was more than 200,000 behind *The Times*.

What went wrong?

As an idea, *The Independent* began life on February 25, 1985. On that date Andreas Whittam

D.D. Guttenplan, a CJR contributing editor, recently completed a fellowship at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, where he worked on a biography of I.F. Stone.



Smith, finance editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, heard that Eddie Shah, an obscure publisher based in Manchester, was about to start a new national tabloid newspaper using computer-driven technology instead of hot type. Computerized reporting’s later deadlines meant the paper could offer fresher news. More important, the new technology meant there would be no need for the antiquated, labor-intensive machinery and ruinously expensive manning levels enforced by Fleet Street’s powerful print unions.

Britain was then the most competitive newspa-



ANNE LEIBOWITZ/CONTACT

per market in the world, and when somebody asked Whittam Smith if the new paper had any chance of success, he said of course not. Then he began to wonder.

Within six months Whittam Smith and two colleagues from the *Telegraph* — features writer Stephen Glover and editorial writer Matthew Symonds — were out raising money for a new kind of newspaper. Amid the shrill partisanship of British journalism, *The Independent* would be allied with no political party. It would also — as befit a newspaper founded by journalists — bow

to the whims of no powerful proprietor. Shareholders were not allowed to own more than 10 percent. Every staffer, from Whittam Smith to the woman who emptied his wastebasket, was given stock options. “People work all their lives on a newspaper and all they get at the end of it is a gold watch,” Whittam Smith used to say in his recruiting spiel. “I want them to have some real wealth.”

For the moment, though, Whittam Smith, Symonds, and Glover kept their day jobs. “We were engaged in a glorious bluff,” writes Glover in *Paper Dreams*, his memoir of the paper’s birth.

The Founders: (from left to right) Andreas Whittam Smith, Matthew Symonds, and Stephen Glover

“To understand how good this paper was, you have to know how bad British newspapers can get”

Investors weren't exactly falling all over themselves for the right to risk £20 million on three journalists. Without the money in place, reporters and editors were also proving reluctant to commit to the new paper. And then, late one night in January 1986, Rupert Murdoch did his future competitors a huge favor.

He, too, had been intrigued by Eddie Shah, and after months of secret preparation, Murdoch moved all of his British papers — including *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* — from Fleet Street to a new plant at Wapping in the east London Docklands area. The move to “Fortress Wapping” — named for the barbed wire fences and armed British soldiers who kept angry picketers at bay — prompted a strike by both newsroom and production workers. But Murdoch, strongly backed by the Thatcher government, kept his presses rolling, and many of his best journalists were reluctant to cross the picket lines. To go from Murdoch to a paper whose very name promised an end to proprietorial interference was, as one of them said recently, “better than dying and going to heaven.”

And very heaven it was, at least in the beginning. Fully a third of the new paper's staff were Murdoch refugees. Murdoch also showed how high-tech journalism could be made to work. Prospective investors no longer had to believe in miracles; they could just look at Wapping and see the future of British journalism. Finally, Murdoch's years of dragging *The Times* downmarket meant that two distinct but very attractive demographic sectors — newly affluent, relatively apolitical young professionals and older members of the establishment who wanted real news in their morning paper — were up for grabs.

“To understand how good this paper was, you have to know about Fleet Street — about how bad British newspapers can get,” says a reporter who has been with *The Independent* since the beginning.

The Independent took its name seriously. The paper refused to participate in the clubby “lobby system” of covering Parliament, which gives reporters access to background briefings in exchange for keeping the briefers' names secret. Margaret Thatcher used the lobby — and the threat of exclusion — to keep the press in line. But *The Independent* wouldn't play.

The Independent took its reporters seriously, too, allowing foreign correspondents like Rupert Cornwell in Moscow, Robert Fisk in Beirut, and Michael Sheridan in Rome the chance to develop the kind of coverage designed to inform — even to influence — government policy.

As a paper run entirely by journalists, with no owners big enough to throw their weight around, no publisher to worry about what the advertisers might say, *The Independent* had an internal culture unlike that of any major American paper. “What

we had,” says one veteran foreign correspondent, “was a fusion between American standards of accuracy, attribution, and authority, and UK levels of style, flair, and panache.”

By American standards, Whittam Smith was simply doing his job when, in April 1987, he decided to publish the *Spycatcher* story. In Britain he was breaking the law. Based on the memoirs of Peter Wright, a former British spy, *The Independent's* front-page story charged that during the 1960s the MI-5 (Britain's CIA) had tried to destabilize the Labour party government of Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Wright's book, *Spycatcher*, “had been banned by the government,” says Glover, “but we got hold of a manuscript and published bits of it. Andreas thought the public had a right to know.”

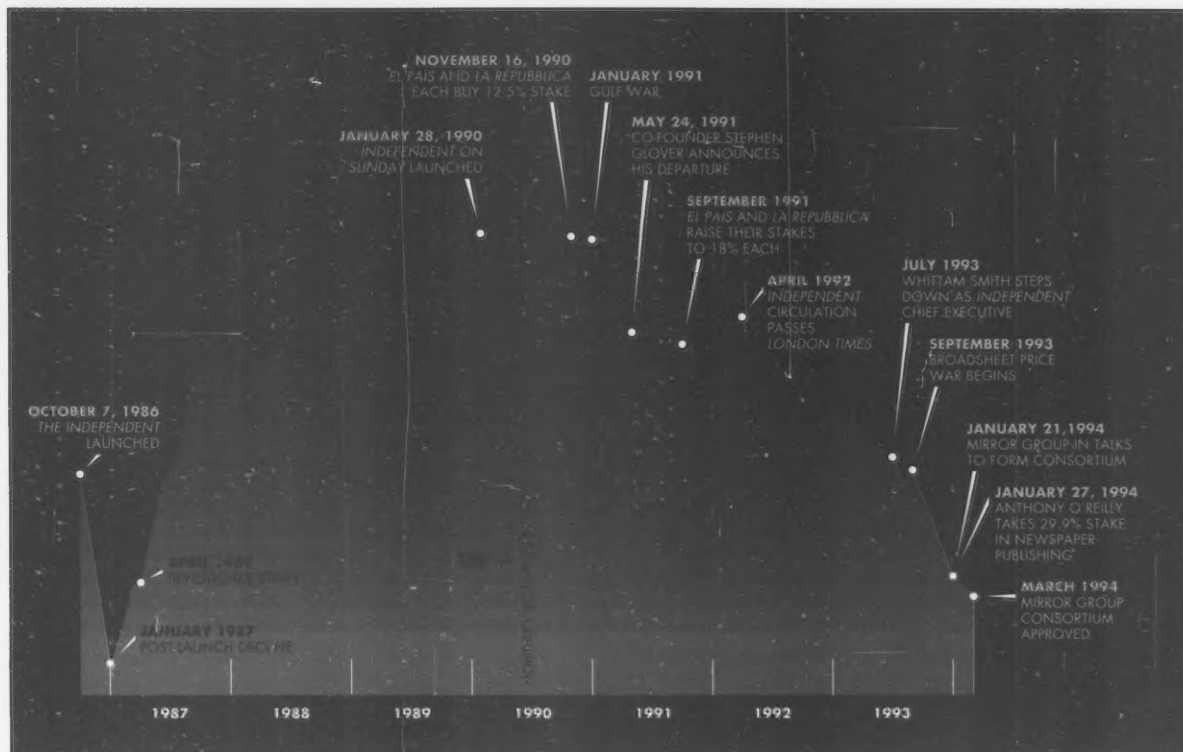
Under Britain's Official Secrets Act, Whittam Smith might well have gone to jail. He was also risking a newspaper which at that point was less than a year old. When the government backed down, the editor was lionized. Circulation took off. “*The Independent* felt it could walk on water,” recalls one editor.

Then the editors decided to start a Sunday paper. It was “not a terrifically wise decision,” says Ian Jack, a bluff, burly Scotsman who now edits *The Independent on Sunday*. This view of where it all began to go wrong was echoed by a number of other editors and managers — past and present. But of *The Independent's* current staff interviewed for this article — including Andreas Whittam Smith — only Jack was willing to speak on the record.

Though Whittam Smith had thought about a Sunday paper for months, it was his discovery in April 1988 that the Chicago Tribune Company was planning to launch its own quality Sunday London broadsheet that pushed him into action. Begun in January 1990 — with its own editorial staff of eighty-six people — *The Independent on Sunday* was a fantastically expensive venture for a company just edging into profitability. Stephen Glover, the Sunday paper's first editor, blames the recession for the waves of red ink that greeted the new launch.

It took the Tribune Company two years to pull the plug on its *Sunday Correspondent*. Meanwhile, to keep his own papers afloat, in November 1990 Whittam Smith persuaded his board to abandon the 10 percent share limit and sold a combined one-fourth interest in Newspaper Publishing to *El País* of Spain and *La Repubblica* of Italy. Daily circulation at the time was about 415,000, and it's been downhill ever since.

Two factors are frequently cited for this decline.



PETER BLACKFORD

One was the fall of Margaret Thatcher. "The paper's identity was free market but anti-Thatcher," says Jack. "We thought she was aggressive and a bit mad, latterly. When she went, we lost an important enemy. The gulf war also didn't do us any good."

John Price, who was assistant editor at the time and is now at *The Observer*, says *The Independent* was so gung-ho during the gulf war that its independence was compromised. "Our coverage was all Toys for the Boys," says Price. "*The Guardian*, which took a much more skeptical approach to the war, gained readers. We lost them."

Home-front politics may have cost the paper readers as well. Surveys showed that more than a third of *Independent* readers worked in the public sector. "We kept telling these people that their jobs shouldn't exist," says Jack, whose Sunday paper, discernibly to the left of the daily, also sells more copies.

While *The Independent* wrestled with its identity crisis, Glover observes, "the competition got better. There are no trade secrets in journalism. If you use photos better, you enable the others to do it too." *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* borrowed liberally from *The Independent's* playbook. *The Guardian* and *The Observer* went a step farther, raiding a few key players. Their success in luring away staff members touches on the final element in the drama: the personality of the

protagonist, Andreas Whittam Smith.

Sooner or later every reporter interviewed for this story got around to "Andreas's desk." It seems that in the early days of the paper, Whittam Smith ran *The Independent* with an open mind and an open door. Reporters, notoriously fond of giving advice, were able to express themselves freely. Whittam Smith, a tall man even when seated, would look down benevolently and smile. Until the day, long before the Sunday paper was launched, when he responded to some complaint or suggestion with: "Look, I have in my top desk drawer a hundred letters of application for every one of your jobs." It was, apparently, a line he grew fond of repeating.

If Whittam Smith's change in mood cast a shadow over the newsroom, his decision to acquire Britain's oldest Sunday paper, *The Observer*, shattered his staff's few remaining illusions about their leader.

As a business proposition, *The Observer* — with its three quarters of a million relatively upmarket readers — was an obvious match. "*The Observer* deal was going to be our route into profit," says Ian Jack.

However, the image of *The Independent* — champion of press freedom — "was irreparably damaged by Whittam Smith's proposal, which would have meant closing a Sunday newspaper,"

The Independent's Rollercoaster Ride

Post-launch decline bottoms out in January 1987, then rebounds in April of that year with the paper's publication of the Spycatcher story. In April 1992, circulation passes that of the *London Times*, peaking at about 415,000, then tumbling to 260,000 this May. (Note: this graph has been adapted from one that appeared in the *Financial Times*.)

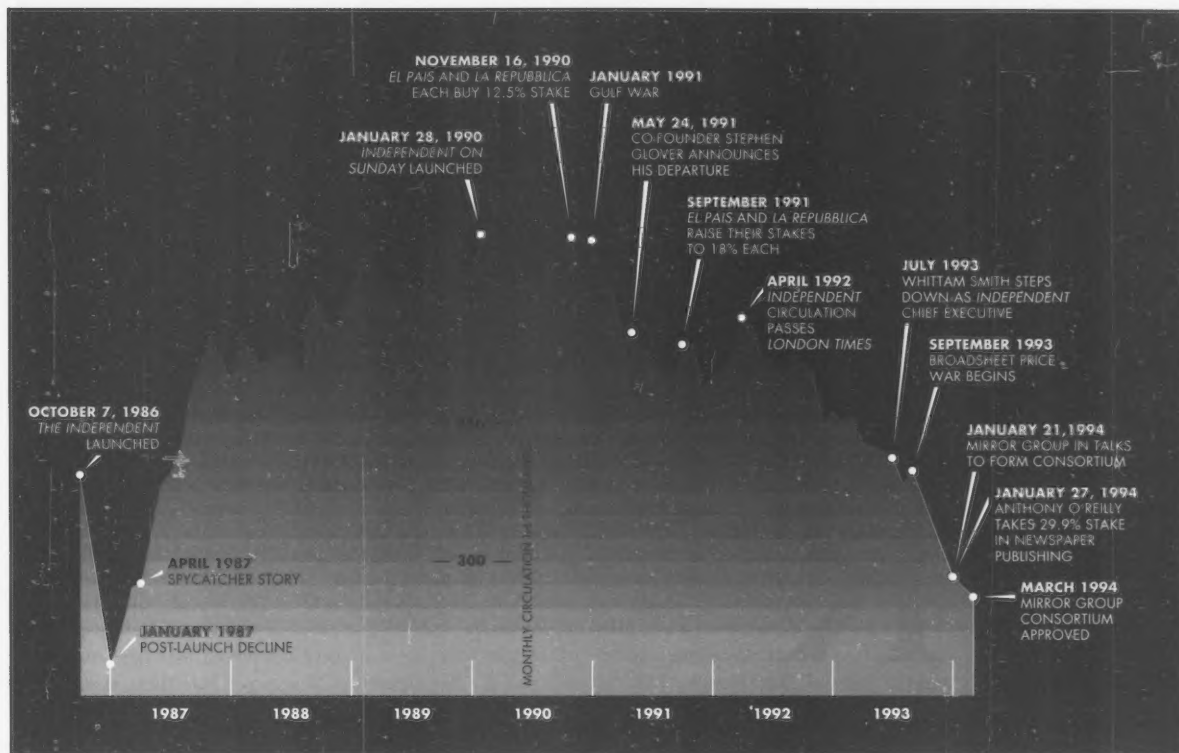
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“Now we’ve got the worst of both worlds — an owner we can’t trust and an editor we can’t respect”

says Stephen Glover. “Andreas was seen as a predatory creature, behaving as a Murdoch.”

Meanwhile, the negotiations were conducted in secret. Reporters hate being kept in the dark more than most people, and since *Independent* staffers had been encouraged to feel the paper was, in a very real sense, theirs — weren’t they all shareholders? — they viewed what might have been simple prudence as evidence of betrayal.

That Whittam Smith’s £10 million offer was rejected — *The Guardian*, which is owned by a nonprofit foundation, bought *The Observer* for £27 million — only made matters worse. “Suddenly we didn’t have a route into profit,” says Jack.

Suddenly their fearless leader seemed like a grasping incompetent. And *The Independent* began to seem like just another pretty good newspaper.

Reeling from self-inflicted wounds, *The Independent* now met up with a true predator. Last September, in a move that seemed transparently aimed at his newest and most successful competitor, Rupert Murdoch cut the price of *The Times* by 15 pence (about 22 cents) to 30 pence. By year’s end *The Independent* had lost some 30,000 in circulation.

This past January, with circulation below 300,000 for the first time in six years, Whittam Smith announced that a consortium of investors, led by Mirror Group Newspapers, would take over *The Independent*. Formerly controlled by Robert Maxwell and now owned by his creditors, MGN proposed to buy 25 to 30 percent of Newspaper Publishing, the corporate parent of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*. Whittam Smith would remain as editor-in-chief and would be given a three-year contract as chairman of the consortium’s board. In addition to providing a much-needed infusion of short-term cash, MGN would take over printing, publishing, and distributing the two papers. The 120 layoffs that would result would be entirely among non-editorial workers.

If Whittam Smith expected gratitude for protecting reporters’ jobs, he was in for a rude shock. Under the proposed merger their ultimate boss would be David Montgomery, who runs MGN and who may be the most despised man in British journalism. His nickname at the *Mirror*, “Rommel” — on the ground that “Montgomery was on our side” — is now common currency at *The Independent* as well.

Paul Foot, a *Daily Mirror* columnist for nearly fourteen years, explained how Montgomery earned his nickname. “When he took over at the *Mirror*, Montgomery gave the staff three assurances, in writing: that editors will remain in their

places, that trade unions will be recognized, and that he had not come in to cut editorial jobs.

“When we refused to accept these assurances,” says Foot, “Montgomery sent them down again with the word ‘definitely’ written in. Three weeks later he sacked the editor of the *Daily Mirror* and replaced him with a man who sacked 100 journalists. He did it by sending a memo telling security guards to prevent them from entering the building. Two union officers were ordered to resign their union positions; when they refused they were dismissed.”

In a stunning rebuke to Whittam Smith, *The Independent* chapter of the National Union of Journalists unanimously voted in February to request a full investigation of the MGN proposal by the government’s Mergers and Monopolies Commission. For a while the union pinned its hopes on Anthony J.F. O’Reilly, a former Irish rugby star and the current c.e.o. of the multinational H.J. Heinz Company. An Irishman who lives in Pittsburgh may seem an odd savior for a British newspaper, but O’Reilly, whose holdings include *The Irish Independent* and *Argus Newspapers*, the biggest chain in South Africa, also happens to own 29.9 percent of Newspaper Publishing, making him the largest single shareholder.

In March the government turned the union down. The MGN deal was done. O’Reilly still has his stock, but in the short run he’s been outmaneuvered. And if *The Independent*’s circulation doesn’t revive quickly, the short run may be all there is.

“You can’t play a long game,” says a veteran reporter bitterly disappointed by the present turn of events. “Now we’ve got the worst of both worlds — an owner [Montgomery] we can’t trust and an editor [Whittam Smith] we can’t respect. We’re supposed to believe that the same people who led us into this disaster will be able to turn things around? There are twenty-one people here about to claim maternity leave. The rest of us are hoping for a miracle.”

Back in February, Ian Jack warned that once circulation sank below 250,000, “advertisers will begin to think there’s nothing in this for us.” By May, *The Independent*’s circulation had dropped to 260,000. That same month the paper unveiled a new tabloid section devoted to London news and features.

A London section is probably a good idea. But *The Guardian* already has a tabloid section. *The Times* has five sections — *The Sunday Times* has eleven! — and some of them are good ideas, too. Besides, *The Independent* has already been through two redesigns — shedding readers each time. For Whittam Smith to succeed now — with his staff united against him, his competitors reinvigorated, and Mirror Group second-guessing his every move — would be quite a feat. ♦

Richard Nixon's Last Campaign

by David Halberstam



August 9, 1974:
The first U.S. president to resign from office waves farewell on the day of his departure from the White House

Richard Nixon and I spent much of our adult political lives bound together, it often seemed to me if not to him. I had been a freshman in college in 1952, forty-two years ago when he made his first national race, and he died a few weeks after my sixtieth birthday. This enduring relationship did not bring us

together, to coin a phrase. I had never been a great fan, and I was most assuredly not one of that tiny group of favored journalists who were close to him in the earlier part of his career, nor one of the select journalists summoned after his disgraced departure from Washington to come to dinner for one of his carefully orchestrated performances in Saddle River, New Jersey. These journalists were invited to what were more often than not stag dinners so they could sample firsthand his

David Halberstam's newest book, October 1964, about the World Series that year between the Yankees and the Cardinals, will be published this summer.

expertise on foreign affairs, and go back to their peers and tell them how good Nixon was in small groups, and how he seemed to have grown in his years since office.

The two of us met only once. It was in 1964, when Neil Sheehan and I ran into him on Manhattan's East Side near where he was living and introduced ourselves to him, saying that we were both back from Vietnam. We must have implied that we wanted to talk to him about it because he fled from us as quickly as possible.

We almost met a second time. This was in the fall of 1967 when I was at *Harper's* and Nixon was just back from Vietnam and gearing up for a 1968 run at the presidency and he invited a select group of writers and editors to his house to hear his views of Vietnam. Ray Price, one of his aides at the time, had called Willie Morris at *Harper's* and had invited him to come. Willie had said he couldn't but that I was the magazine's expert on Vietnam and perhaps I could come in his place. Ray promised to get back to Willie and called later to say that I was not quite right for the group, but perhaps I could come on another occasion. I never got an invitation. Still, I never made his enemies list either. I had written critically of his two Democratic predecessors, and once, after his fall from office, I went on local television during a book tour to be interviewed by, of all people, Martha Mitchell, who, having read *The Best and The Brightest* in preparation, complimented me on it and said that she had never realized reporters had been so critical of the Kennedy years.

I did not think of myself as a Nixon hater, although I probably qualified on a number of grounds, and I wished him well when he began his presidency. When Gerry Ford pardoned him I was glad, not so much because it would make life easier for Nixon but because it would make life easier for the country, the fabric of which, I felt, had been damaged enough (although in retrospect I think the pardon should have included some sort of promise on his part to be gone from the public scene permanently).

Having watched him carefully over

the years, I felt there were very few things about Richard Nixon that could surprise me. I was wrong. The success of his final campaign — the one that began the moment he was involuntarily driven from office, just ahead of impeachment in 1974, and that lasted for twenty years until his death in 1994 — was a tour de force, the most successful race of his entire career. It was in essence a campaign to rehabilitate himself, to restore his good name, and to minimize Watergate, and he waged it doggedly and with singular skill, knowing all the while that the people he depended on for its success were the very people he considered to be his sworn enemies — the men and women of the media. He waged it on two fronts, the first being those Saddle River dinners and his books and television appearances, the second being more covert: an attempt — which still goes on — to block access to thousands of tapes that are supposed to be in the public domain.

Anyone watching and listening to the television coverage of his final days, from his death to his funeral, had to be impressed by the success of his effort. The coverage seemed to be not merely scripted, but indeed edited by Nixon himself — I almost thought I might see his name on the final credits: Executive Producer, Richard M. Nixon.

In the end, no one could doubt that this campaign was the greatest success of his career. If the print coverage of him was hardly robust, the degree to which the networks went in the tank was simply shameful. Those of us who always suspected that Nixon would have been a better campaign manager than candidate now had that view reinforced. The degree to which the networks were coopted by his preplanned script must have surprised even the networks' executives and the members of the Nixon family themselves, and might even give the network people some pause over how to cover any similar situation in the unlikely event that there is a similar situation.

Nixon pulled off this last, most successful campaign against great odds, and although it is unlikely that future historians will be as forgetful of the more complex nature of his personality and



The coverage seemed to be not merely scripted but indeed edited by Nixon himself



April 26, 1994: Nixon's casket arrives at the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace in Yorba Linda, California

the tragic impact of that personality on his political record as the leading television personalities were during the final ceremonies, one had to admire the true grit that went into this twenty-year-long campaign. Nixon was aided by a number of things. There was no real opponent: over all those final years he was campaigning primarily against himself, and against modern memory, which in a television age is marginal enough, and

he was doing it in a country where most ordinary people were generally eager to forget so complex and sordid an event as Watergate.

If, as he began his comeback, Nixon was running against history then television was most assuredly his instrument of choice. Television far more than print, because of space limitations and because of other biases built into its producer system, has an institutional bias against history, even contemporary history of the most relevant sort. All journalism favors the new over the old, but television prefers it more demonstrably; there seems in the end to be a profound institutional bias about going to archival film, as if that is a waste of time and something to be done only if there is no live action or pseudo-action taking place on the screen. That meant that there was little inclination within the medium at a moment like this to go to any kind of serious record.

In addition, Nixon — the most fiercely partisan politician of modern times — was forced by the very nature of the final campaign to go the high road the entire time. Setting out to be the wise elder statesman, he did not dare become partisan. That would only mean the reincarnation of the divisive Nixon of the past, the very Nixon he was running against. The high road often took him overseas, and he was often seen in Moscow and Beijing. He was for good international relationships, rather than bad ones, and he was for better relations with the Communists, although, needless to say, one always had to be wary of the Communists. He believed in a strong defense, rather than a weak one, for the road to peace could only be taken by those who were strong.

He used the immediate circumstances of his death exceptionally well. The death of a head of state and the subsequent state funeral are hardly the optimum time for journalists to dredge up old controversies; it is a time to mourn and to remember, and the doubts of even the best reporters who are called on to comment are, by the very nature of the event, muted. One tends to speak well of the dead anyway, and Nixon understood that. He understood as well that network television people rise to all ceremonial occasions, and if

they do not cover American politics very well, they do cover ceremonies well, and among their favorite ceremonies are funerals. (Though the networks have barely bothered to cover the rise of modern industrial Japan, a story that does not lend itself to pictures, they flew to Tokyo to cover in great and loving detail the funeral of Emperor Hirohito, a man they had barely deigned to notice in life.)

In addition, I am sure Nixon understood something else about network television: that at such moments there is an unconscious institutional instinct on the part of network journalists — the higher they are, the more concerned they are, like politicians, about losing their own popularity — to be concerned more than anything else about *positioning* themselves. One can assume, then, that the essential inner equation of ranking network journalists during these days was something like this: the more truth I tell, and the closer I come to the complexity of this man, the less welcome I will seem at his funeral (and in the living rooms of America), and the more I will seem to be violating the spirit of it, and the more the ordinary people of the country will resent me rather than the deceased.

Mr. Nixon's final campaign struck me from the start as of a piece and a very shrewd one. At first, when Nixon began to shake the bonds of his singular disgrace, he returned as something else that television news likes: an aberration — a disgraced former official trying to come back, gradually working to transform himself from exiled hermit and the man of disgrace to would-be elder statesman. That process made him a worthy figure for television: if he was not yet a wise elder, he was something better — a figure not so much of politics but of an ongoing American soap opera. We all had an almost prurient interest in this man, so recently at center stage, then driven off into exile. And so, with his doggedness and his productivity, he was slowly and systematically legitimized.

Television was the preferred conduit, its people being dramatically less disputatious than those of print, and generally more willing to accept a person at face value, its senior people far more willing to show flexibility on the interview's

ground rules (what could and could not be asked) in order to gain access. Nixon, not surprisingly, tended to be quite controlling in setting the parameters of his televised appearances, and those of us with long memories will remember that some seventeen years ago, when he decided to talk about Watergate for the record for the first time, he was paid a great deal of money for doing it and the chosen vehicle for this moment was David Frost, whom only the most generous, such as Mr. Frost himself, would describe as a journalist.

As the campaign continued, Nixon wrote a great many books, one of them, *RN*, quite revealing, and many of them, it seemed to me, quite repetitive. Books were important because, for one thing, he could choose the subject: statecraft (De Gaulle meets *RN*, Mao meets *RN*, *RN* reflects on the Churchill he knew). There is, I think, a strong sense in these books that *RN*'s relationships with and intimate knowledge of the past greats of the world have been hyped considerably. An example of this may be found in the most recent book, *Beyond Peace*, where Nixon comments on the fact that it was Dwight Eisenhower who had personally told him of how the Russians had suffered terribly but had played an indispensable role in defeating Nazi Germany. I quite agree with that, but I must say that it did not take a personal intimate conversation with Ike to make me aware of the contribution of the Red Army. (One can almost imagine the White House conversation. Ike: "Dick, did I ever tell you about the role of the Red Army near the end of World War II?" Nixon: "No, but I bet they stood by and let us do all the heavy lifting." Ike: "No, as a matter of fact, Dick, for a bunch of Commies, they really surprised me. I would call their role indispensable.")

Books were important for another reason: they got him on the television shows. It is not unfair to say that in most appearances he went up against slow-pitch softball. As his final campaign progressed, we learned that he had a very good sense of how and where to go to gain attention. He went to a great many funerals at home and around the world. He traveled often, and seemed late in life to have a fondness for visiting Communist dictator-

If the print coverage of him was hardly robust, the degree to which the networks went in the tank was simply shameful

ships, where, ironically, he tended to be treated as a greater celebrity than when he visited anything as pedestrian as a working democracy.

The circumstances of his meeting representatives of the media world were always carefully monitored and controlled. Those who were screened through for the dinners at Saddle River tended to be either of an ideological predisposition that would allow Nixon some measure of confidence about what they might ask after dinner or too young to remember the Nixon who was so divisive a political figure.

Not many of my generation who had watched this long psycho-struggle were likely to make the cut. For a time Nixon seemed to be in pursuit of my friend Ward Just, a distinguished *Washington Post* reporter who has since turned to writing exceptional novels, and many of Just's friends were amazed when he seemed to have made the Nixon A-list and a brief flirtation between the two took place. Since, like most of his contemporaries who did not make the list, Just was not a very ideological man but mildly liberal at heart, and a man who, having covered the Vietnam War, thought it abhorrent, the rest of us wondered what was happening, and whether Ward had tried to make a separate peace. He soon went to the top Nixon mailing list and became the recipient of speeches, memos, itineraries, and even received an autographed copy of Nixon's latest book, one not so much signed as initialed, *RN*, a reminder, of course, that he had been president. For a time we suspected that Ward had not only made the cut but would soon be invited to dinner at Saddle River. And then catastrophe struck: Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times* wrote a column quoting from one of Just's novels a disparaging reference to the former presi-

dent. And, with that, the process of seduction, such as it was, stopped. Just went immediately off the A-list.

Bob Woodward, who watched the procession of reporters to Saddle River over the years (involuntarily from the outside, I might add), was particularly intrigued by what he came to believe was a very deliberate attempt by Nixon and the people around him to bring in young reporters, preferably those who were then covering the White House or the incumbent president in some form or another. Nixon's strategy was to contrast his own strengths with the weaknesses of the incumbent and to gain by comparison. When Reagan was president — a likeable man of considerable personal ease, but a man hardly known for being able to string coherent sentences together when he spoke informally about policy — there was an emphasis on Nixon's mastery of subject matter, the fact that he could open his mouth and out would come entire sentences, all of them lucid, and then paragraphs, all of them complete, and, it appeared, publishable at the moment of utterance. With Bush, far better informed and better at the small talk of the office than Reagan, Nixon seemed to seize on Bush's weakness, which was that he seemed to lack any larger vision, or grand design, and in the Bush years he emphasized his own larger view of the world.

The campaign was nothing if not dogged. There were the endless trips overseas, the many books, the carefully edited selections from the books in magazines that had once been so critical of him, like *Time*, and the controlled, indeed sanitized appearances on various television talk shows. And with that, in the great vacuum of expertise which exists in this country of people who can talk intelligently about foreign policy and are actually allowed into a television studio, Nixon as the elder statesman of the world began to emerge.

In those later years, his was surely a reasonably intelligent voice, and he generally added to, rather than subtracted from, the public debate. At the end, he was talking more intelligently about helping the post-Communist Russians

than was the incumbent Republican, George Bush, and on the book jacket of his newest book there is a quite sane recommendation for normalizing relations with Cuba, along the lines of our relationship with China. But we ought to be clear about this: we are not talking about George Kennan here — that is, an intellect of great clarity and originality who casts a shining light on the world, thereby helping us to understand what up to then had seemed beyond comprehension. We are talking about a rather conventional, quite intelligent man who, late in his life, was willing to see the world as it was and no longer took political profit from distorting that image as he had for so long. Indeed, one of the problems with his rise as a statesman was the gap between the portrait of the bipolar world he accepted and propagated as an elder statesman and the views of the violently partisan figure who had so bitterly attacked the Democrat officials who were the principal architects of that very same world.

He was much hailed in those last few days for having had the courage to normalize relationships with China. But the truth was that the Washington-Beijing relationship could probably have been normalized as much as a decade earlier, perhaps as early as 1962, when serious signs of the split between the Chinese and the Russians first appeared. What paralyzed first the Kennedy and then the Johnson administration was the knowledge that if they moved in that direction they would be violently attacked by the core of the Republican party, led, of course, by Nixon. In that critical decade when true statesmanship was crucial and would have been profoundly helpful he remained the most partisan of figures. Perhaps this is the signature of a Nixon hater, but it does, I think, detract somewhat significantly from the historic importance of his trip to China that he was the only president of the United States who could go to China without being red-baited by Richard Nixon.

The implications of that lost decade, and of his own early partisanship on the issues of China and Vietnam, are quite profound and were glossed over by the media at the end. They should have been far more carefully scrutinized. Lyndon Johnson made the fateful deci-

The funeral was in no small degree a political event, and should have been reported with a certain cool reserve

sion to send combat troops to Vietnam in 1965, not because he had any illusions about how easy a war it would be (he certainly had no idea of the degree of difficulty awaiting the American troops who went there, but he did know that it was going to be a great deal harder than a number of his advisers suggested), but because he had powerful memories of the 1950s and the crude Republican attacks on Truman and Acheson for allegedly losing China. When that happened, Johnson liked to say, Truman had lost the Congress, and he, Lyndon Johnson, was not going to be the president who lost the Great Society because he lost Saigon. The poison that had been gratuitously injected into the bloodstream in the '50s by the Republican right, including Nixon, came back to haunt us in the '60s.

Many commentators spoke of the fact that Nixon had ended the Vietnam War. Again, the record is more complicated. In truth, 1968 was a plebiscite against the war, and he could have ended the war much sooner with the same eventual result, and I suspect a much less divided nation, had he been a less divisive person. Instead, some 20,000 Americans and perhaps 200,000 Vietnamese died in the ensuing period when he was president and before the inevitable collapse of Saigon. We also lost a chance to bring out in an orderly way those Vietnamese who had been on our side, leaving us with that pathetic spectacle of trusted allies scrambling on the embassy roof, trying to grab on to skids of helicopters, and we in that period extended the war to Cambodia, with tragic consequences for that country.

What stopped him from ending the

war sooner was not the reality that existed on the ground there — for it was always laughable that the ARVIN, a defeated army that had failed in the years before 1965 to defeat its enemy, could do what 500,000 Americans and the heaviest bombing in the history of mankind had failed to do. What stood between Nixon and a quicker end to the war was his own past, his own rhetoric and his own bias. The one thing the American people were entitled to in this period after so tragic an intervention and bitter an experience was some measure of truth of how and why we had failed, and what they got was a sham.

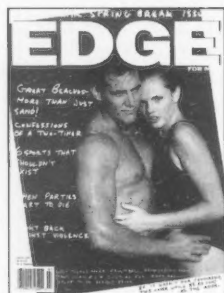
By mentioning all this, I do not mean to suggest that I wanted the networks to make Nixon out to be a demon at the moment of his death. I also realize that there are certain moments of national tragedy which go beyond normal partisan politics, when the anchors and correspondents are more than reporters and are almost consciously agents of a process of healing. At moments like this — the slaying of a young politician or the tragic explosion of a space shuttle — they help remind the American people that the residual strengths of the country are far greater than the momentary darkness caused by the bullet of an assassin or the explosion of a space ship. But this was not one of those moments. Richard Nixon was not cut down in the flower of his youth. The nation was not torn apart by his death. The funeral as planned was not just the funeral of a man who had not been in office in twenty years and had left in disgrace. It was at the very least, and quite identifiably, part of a larger process to restore to him the aura of an unblemished presidency, and to erase the remembrance of so disfiguring a scandal, and therefore to no small degree a political event, and it should have been reported as such, with a certain cool reserve.

The portrait given us over the final days of a wise elder statesman who had battled his way back from serious political problems rather than the tense, angry man of significant skills — the Nixon preserved on the tapes: insecure, vindictive, raging at everyone and everything around him — represented Nixon's final triumph over his arch enemy: the media. ♦

TALKIN' 'BOUT

The Twentysomething Magazine Scene

by Liza Featherstone



Forty-six million Americans are between the ages of twenty and thirty, and marketers and the media are falling all over themselves trying to figure out who these new consumers are: Scotch drinkers? Kurt Cobain mourners? "Psychic Friends" customers? Generation X? When, in 1991, *Time* magazine ran a scolding cover story on the bad attitude and sorry prospects of the generation, other national media followed suit. That same year the term "slacker," from a film about aimless young people in Austin, Texas, caught on.

Meanwhile, a generation of magazines being created for — and by — the twentysomethings is emerging. Editors at these magazines deal in different ways with the GenX stereotypes: they hate them, use them, resist them, endlessly analyze them, and, in the best of cases, try to rise above them, to be about something more than just being young.

Here's what some of them have produced:

Inside Edge (circulation: 125,000), is a Neanderthalian how-to-party-and-get-lucky manual for the eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old male. Still, editor-in-chief Jon Hsu feels compelled to define it this way: "*Inside Edge* is not a 'slacker' magazine. We would do well at any time in history."

Hsu and publisher Aaron Shapiro started *Inside Edge* last year, while they were juniors at Harvard, after concluding that there were no magazines for men their age. Hsu initially promoted the magazine as a GenX publication, but now resists the stereotype: "Who would want to market to a group that is lazy, apathetic, unmotivated, and alienated from mainstream society?" he asks.

Indeed, though twentysomething hype has helped publicize *IE*, the magazine's themes are familiar good ol' boy fare: the covers display tightly clad live Barbies draped over average-looking guys, and two recent issues offered such timeless heads as "Are You a Slobbering Alco-

holic?" "Advice on Women, Beer, and Booze," and "Confessions of a 2 Timer."

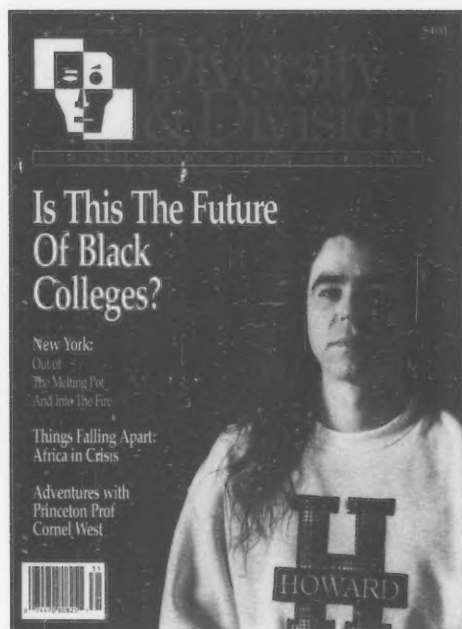
In eloquent defiance of GenX hype, the angry young men behind *The Baffler* (circulation: about 3,500), a Chicago journal of cultural criticism, proclaim their publication "the enemy of the stars, the deflator of celebrity." They are outsiders and proud of it: "In a time when the 'cutting edge' has become a powerful tool for mediocrization, we dedicate ourselves to its blunting." Since its founding in 1988 by another pair of undergraduates — Keith White and Tom Frank (now graduate students) — this journal has come out five times. *The Baffler* reader (presumably male, as nearly all the magazine's writers are) is skeptical about everything mainstream culture tries to sell him, from the *Details* magazine man ("bee-stung lips, carefully unkempt hair ... baggy Versace suits, the attendant awed babes, the tattoos ...") to traditional work ("the brain-deadening architecture of your office complexes"). He is too smart for his current job; he was too smart for the suburbs he grew up in. In fact, his identity has evolved in opposition to his mall-and-cheerleaders upbringing, and his anti-establishment politics were formed by the '70s and '80s punk rock explosion. Past issues have addressed such topics as life in the suburbs and "consolidated deviance" (*Bafflerspeak* for the co-optation of rebellion); the August issue will focus on the corporate workplace, particularly from the perspective of temps.

Though for obvious reasons it doesn't have an easy time getting advertisers, *The Baffler* has received deservedly favorable press attention, particularly for an exclusive titled "Harsh Realm, Mr. Sulzberger!" which revealed that a *New York Times* Styles section list of Seattle twentysomething slang had been fed to the paper as a prank and was, in fact, utterly fabricated.

Might, despite a slick appearance, also positions itself as an alternative to mass culture. A "god-damn brain picnic for the young and restless,"

Liza Featherstone is a free-lance writer and a CJR fact-checker.

THEIR GENERATION



Might's first issue, which hit national newstands in early February, opens with a table of contents — unrelated to the magazine's actual material — that satirizes the media's usual youth-oriented offerings: "Cindy Crawford — She's a Model and She's Kind of Smart: *The Might* Interview," "Hair — How Much Is Too Much?" and "Depeche Mode: Are They Great or What?" Throughout the magazine margins are lined with Jenny Holzer-style messages (like "Why is office?" "When is marriage?"), highlighted in black. Articles include a thoughtful essay on Katie Roiphe and the date-rape-hype controversy by Paula Kamen, author of *Feminist Fatale*, and features about activist rappers, teaching abroad, and pirate radio.

Co-founder David Eggers says the next issue will be less generationally self-conscious. "We made a rule that we wouldn't use the word 'generation' in the next issue," he says. "Or 'X,' or 'slacker.' We wanted to move beyond that to stuff we're interested in." So far this "stuff" remains somewhat undefined, though this seeming directionlessness may be right on target.

Might is not unlike its imagined reader, a twen-

tysomething who doesn't have a great job but is trying to figure out what to do with her life. She (or he) shares with *The Baffler* reader a skepticism about politics, marketing, and American culture, but is less angry, more open-minded. *Might* has no corporate backing, but it does have some advertisers, and all 10,000 newstand copies of the February premiere issue were sold out.

The Next Progressive (circulation: 5,000) is an unabashedly political quarterly started in August 1991 by Eric Liu, then a Senate aide, who felt that articulate young people needed to weigh in against that summer's anti-twentysomething barrage. The intentionally stark layout emphasizes content over form and repudiates the flashy graphics frequently used to target GenX. Calling his generation "pragmatic," "media savvy," and "post-partisan," Liu, who writes speeches for Bill Clinton, says he wants the magazine to be full of "thoughtful political pieces by writers who just happen to be young, to move away from pieces that are self-consciously generational." *TNP's* imagined readers are, like many of its writers, Ivy-educated, have jobs that older people respect, and are confident that their opinions matter.

Diversity & Division (circulation: 10,000), a quarterly funded in part by the Washington, D.C.-based Madison Center for Educational Affairs, is aimed at young conservatives. Like *TNP*, it started in 1991 in response to media denigration of its "buster" generation. The reader is assumed to be a student or recent graduate, embittered by a too-liberal education. One writer recounts his lonely odyssey as a conservative in radical scholar Cornel West's class at Princeton. Recently, a particularly outraged feature revealed that author Maya Angelou cancelled a campus appearance due to "illness," then appeared on *Arsenio* that same day. Less hysterical and more reflective are occasional pop culture essays — one explores the possible conservatism of "grunge."

D & D's writers use part of the GenX mytholo-

Whether they mock, despise, deconstruct, or traffic in GenX, all of these magazines must negotiate it delicately

A *Baffler* exclusive revealed that a *New York Times* Styles section list of Seattle twentysomething slang had been fed to the paper as a prank

MIGHT

2

Our First 50 Years!

Butt Nekkid People!
Cold Hard Cash!
Costa Rica Cavalcade!
Teach for America!
Galaxies of Stars!
Saucy, Sassy, Sexy!
Nasty, Brutish & Short!

Exploitation How Far Should We Go?	Victory in the East!	Gallagher Fever!
MIGHT OCT. 1964 The Beatles Are Reds!	MIGHT JULY 1965 How to Make Your Man a Tiger in Bed	MIGHT MARCH 1967 KILLER BEES!
MIGHT NOV. 1949 Death The Winner Killy	MIGHT DEC. 1958 Unlocking the Secrets of SHEEP	MIGHT NOV. 1966 The PC It's All Hype
MIGHT MAY 1962 How to Be a Man and Get the Rabies!	MIGHT SEPT. 1964 Joy & Dewey Have a Party!	MIGHT JUNE 1952 Sliced Bread Is the Greatest of All Time
MIGHT SEPT. 1976 Sex	MIGHT SEPT. 1967 HERO!	MIGHT OCT. 1979 Did God Create Monkeys First?
MIGHT AUG. 1990 Vanilla Ice The Prince of Rap	MIGHT SEPT. 1985 Oprahmania!!	MIGHT SEPT. 1976 Retro Here to Stay!
MIGHT MAR. 1968 THE FUTURE	MIGHT NOV. 1991 THE FUTURE	MIGHT JULY 1992 THE FUTURE



gy, the supposed hostility toward baby boomers, to condemn the liberal and radical movements of the 1960s, recasting old-fashioned partisan politics into sexier generational rage. The magazine is letting up on that tactic, however, according to editor-in-chief Jeff Muir: "We rode the GenX wave as far as we could. For self-interested reasons."

Who Cares, a "journal of service and action," edited entirely by women in their twenties, was launched last October. Founded by three recent college graduates — Heather McLeod, Leslie Crutchfield, and Chloe Breyer — and funded by

grants, subscriptions, newsstand sales, and advertising, *Who Cares* seeks to provide a forum for a perceived growing movement of entrepreneurial grassroots service projects run by young people. The first two issues were star-studded; Annie Leibowitz, Robert Coles, Ted Kennedy, and Bernie Sanders were among the contributors. Articles pondered potential glitches in Clinton's national service plan and racism within white-dominated activist communities. At its best, *Who Cares* has a lively and ironic tone.

The magazine represents a generation of "pragmatic idealists" and intends, Breyer says, "to counteract the inaccurate stereotype of us as 'slackers,' indifferent to the problems of society." But, Crutchfield adds, "This is not generational warfare. These young people learned from the activists of the sixties and seventies."

Whether they despise, mock, deconstruct, or traffic in GenX, all of these magazines must negotiate it delicately. They owe their existence to the twentysomething moment, yet their future depends on transcending MTV clichés with a larger mission, one that will continue to matter even after twentysomethings turn thirty and Nirvana and Pearl Jam become Classic Rock. ♦

Things look different through a mother's eyes.



MARY HARRIS "MOTHER" JONES

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ON THE
JOB

BUYING NEWS

BY BRUCE SELCRAIG

Last February, Jacquee Petchel, head of the investigative unit of Minneapolis's WCCO-TV, was working on a story about dangerous doctors. One source she sought out was a woman in Kankakee, Illinois, who had brought a malpractice suit against a Minnesota doctor in connection with the death of her husband. But Petchel never got the interview. The woman told Petchel she would not discuss the lawsuit without getting paid.

"I've been a reporter fifteen years," says Petchel, who came to WCCO from *The Miami Herald*, "and this was my first time encountering this. Is this happening a lot?"

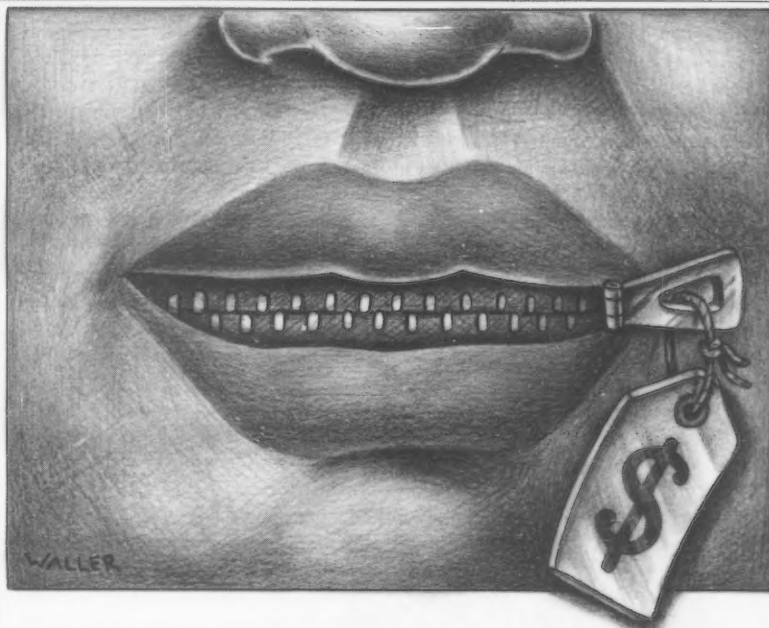
Well, perhaps not enough to get us all invited to *Oprah* to complain about it, but more than most reporters probably imagine.

•Two years ago, Pete Noyes, a veteran Los Angeles television reporter, was doing a story for a KNBC-TV program called *Murder One*, which investigated unsolved homicides. "A girl, twenty-one, had been kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by a Los Angeles gang member," Noyes recalls, "and the sheriff's department had asked us for help in solving the case, so I went out and interviewed the mother and the grandmother [of the slain woman], and, after the interview, they asked, 'How much are we going to get paid?'"

"It hit me like a thunderbolt," Noyes says. "I thought we were doing them a favor."

•After the second Rodney King trial,

Selcraig is a writer based in Austin, Texas.



Los Angeles Times reporters found themselves excluded from post-trial interviews with certain jurors because they weren't willing to pay for them. "We went to one juror's house in Orange County, knocked on the door, and were promptly asked, 'What are you paying?'" recalls *Times* city editor Joel Sappell. "It's a reality. You have to deal with it."

•During the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, reporter Robert Riggs of WFAA-TV in Dallas approached a family member when "suddenly an Australian TV crew member steps in front of the camera and says, 'We have exclusive rights! We have exclusive rights!'"

Riggs says he was repeatedly approached by fringe figures willing to sell him cult-related tapes; one even offered, for a price, to carry a tape recorder into the county jail to record a Davidian confession. "Her eyes had dollar signs in them," Riggs says. "Of course we didn't pay. I think you just have to admit that sometimes you're going to get beaten."

Paying sources to talk is hardly a new phenomenon. Nearly twenty years have passed since *60 Minutes* paid Nixon aide H.R. Haldeman \$25,000 and Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy \$15,000 for interviews. But the practice has escalated recently, and people in the farthest reaches of our wired nation

have heard about cash payments for tales of Tonya and the Bobbitts, among others. As a result, more sources want money.

Nowadays, tabloid TV shows routinely pay for interviews, while mainstream magazines as disparate as *Sports Illustrated* and *Redbook* have paid for news exclusives. Prime-time newsmagazines have devised a way of paying for news without exactly owning up to doing so. Recently, a network TV producer — angry, depressed, fearing for his job, and insisting on anonymity — called me from the New York offices of a respected TV newsmagazine. "We're buying news," he said. "We're paying people who are players in the story and calling them consultants. We're buying off local reporters to get their sources. We're acting like the tabloid shows. And what's really distressing is that no one feels bad about it."

John Bobbitt's media lawyer, Paul Erickson, told *The Washington Post* about other ways network shows were skirting the rules: paying "for weekends in New York, first-class air travel, a new coat. They give you \$500 a day for 'food' and they don't care what you do with the money."

So how can enterprising reporters who don't pay for news compete against those who do? Several journalists sug-

gest that the issue be made part of the story. "Raise the question of how much money the sources have received," says Robert Riggs of WFAA.

"By all means, tell the readers you don't pay," says San Antonio *Express-News* state editor Fred Bonavita, whose reporters went head to head against the tabs on the Branch Davidian siege and trial. "You need to get the word out that your story is not tainted by the

exchange of money."

Many police officers and prosecutors now tell their key witnesses not to accept money for their testimony before trial for fear that their carefully prepared cases may implode as a result of tabloid taint — as happened in the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, in which prosecution witness Anne Mercer was savaged by defense attorneys after she admitted taking \$40,000 to appear

on *A Current Affair*.

Riggs draws the obvious newsroom corollary: "If you think attorneys will tear apart witnesses who have taken money, imagine what they would do in a libel case to the reporters who were doing the paying."

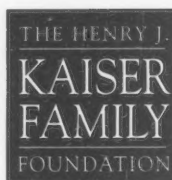
Meanwhile, some reporters suggest that, if the source is determined to sing only for the highest bidder, there is no alternative but to concede defeat on the scoop and negotiate to get a more thorough follow-up. "Sometimes," says a former print reporter now with a network television show, "after these people have told their story and gotten their money, they have a bitter taste in their mouth about how they were treated or about how little of the story they actually got out. A good reporter should capitalize on that."

Off the record, some heretical reporters wonder why some sources, especially those who risk retribution for providing help, shouldn't be paid, much like some police informants. Some even argue that information is simply a commodity, along the lines of other commodities that news operations pay for, such as legal advice and circulation figures.

Predictably, *Inside Edition* anchorman Bill O'Reilly defends the tabloid show's payment policies: "The networks are making millions off news programs. Why shouldn't the common man participate in that? It's capitalism at its finest."

Even as mainstream a journalist as *Newsweek* contributing editor Gregg Easterbrook sees this as an intellectual-property issue. "I don't see why professional reporters should be the only ones to profit from producing news," he says. "We in the press seem to think [people] should surrender their privacy and submit to our embarrassing questions so that we can make money off it."

Most reporters have little patience with such contrarian logic. "We never did it at *The New York Times*," says investigative reporter Seymour Hersh. "We used to fly people in and put them up at a good hotel and feed them, give them a free phone and all that. But just paying someone for information is a rational no-no." ♦



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In 1995, the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program will again award up to six fellowships a year to print, television and radio journalists and editors interested in health policy and public health. Applications for the 1995 program will be available shortly, for submission by March 1995. The aim is to provide health journalists with a highly flexible range of opportunities to pursue in-depth individual projects related to health policy and public health issues.

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THE VIEW OF YOU FROM THE HILL

BY JONATHAN ROWE

What really grates on people up here on the Hill, myself included, is the sanctimony and hypocrisy of the capital press corps, the way too many reporters fail to hold themselves to the same standards they expect of Congress. I don't say this as a defensive pol. I've spent a lot more time on the other side, as an editor of *The Washington Monthly* and a staff writer for *The Christian Science Monitor*. I also worked for five years with Ralph Nader, not a venue that encourages coddling views of Congress or of politicians.

Now, having seen Washington from both sides, I have to tell you: I generally have more respect for the pols. They have a tougher job, carry more responsibility, suffer more abuse, and do all this, for the most part, with much more grace than reporters. For all the defects of our democracy, they are accountable in ways that few in the media (or corporate business, for that matter) ever will be. I know there are some bad ones. But there are a lot more elected people in Washington trying to do a good job, honorably, than the media would lead you to believe. It pains me to watch these people get gang-tackled and torn to shreds by reporters who can dish it out but can't take it. It pains me just as much to see the cartoon version of Washington and power and of this fragile democracy of ours that emerges.

Reporters say that politicians should

Jonathan Rowe is a former journalist who currently works as a Senate staff member.

meet a "higher standard." I don't buy that. In a mass market democracy, the purity of the media may be even more important than that of our legislators. A George Will or Sam Donaldson or Cokie Roberts reaches a lot more people than your typical member of Congress. They have a lot more say in the public debate. If they are taking money from the very same interest groups that throng the halls of Congress, that corrupts the national debate no less than when members of Congress take the money. At least members of Congress have to disclose such payments. Journalists don't.

Name a perk that Congress gets skewered for, and chances are the media get it too. Free parking at National Airport? Not many reporters I know pay for their own parking. More likely they take an expense-account cab ride and get deposited right at the gate. Speaking of free parking, how about those choice spots that are reserved for reporters, complete with twenty-four-hour security from the capital police?

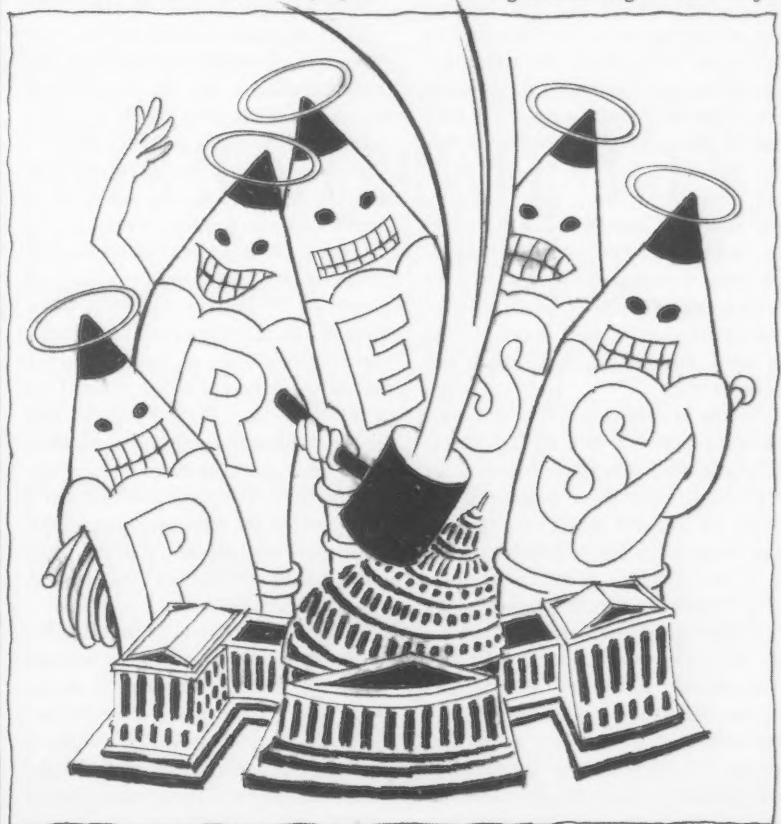
Junkets? What about the Olympics,

the Superbowl, the political conventions, or summit meetings in foreign capitals? It would only take about three reporters, total, to inform the public adequately regarding such events. For presidential vacations in Martha's Vineyard or Colorado, one would do quite well.

I once asked a newspaper editor why he bothered attending the conventions with a bevy of his reporters. Would they really learn anything that the 5,000 or so journalists there weren't already reporting? When I persisted in this line of questioning, he bristled. "Dam it," he said. "I'm going to the conventions."

I certainly don't want to poop on anybody's party. I just don't see why a congressman who visits, say, Geneva, is automatically assumed to be on a junket, while a reporter who spends a week in Geneva is assumed to be on grave reportorial business. (I won't raise the question of frequent flyer miles, since I am confident that all reporters give their miles back to their employers, who paid for them.)

Wining and dining? While major



bureaus here wage constant battle against the epicurean tendencies of their reporters, when the company is paying, in my office the typical senatorial lunch is a slice of pizza, or perhaps a bowl of chili. Another senator I know has popcorn and frozen yogurt just about every day.

Accepting "honoraria" from special interest groups? Big-shot Washington reporters have been accepting thousands of dollars from industry groups as honoraria for speeches for years.

Members of Congress and their staffs are subject to an ethics code that is talmudic in its complexity and petty detail. Members cannot accept honoraria or payment for articles. Staff can do so only under very limited conditions. (I'm writing this during an unpaid leave.) It's hard enough to suffer the media when they call Congress crooks. To see them shoveling it in from the very interest groups they accuse Congress of selling out to and then shuck and jive like a politician caught in a funny land deal, really sticks in the craw. When Hillary Rodham Clinton made her hundred thousand in the commodities market, she at least had to put up a thousand of her own. Journo-celebs like Sam Donaldson and George Will can make that much for a few speeches, risk-free, and all they have to put down are a few diet sodas.

Pay and perks are not the only matters on which elected people think journalists need to look in the mirror. Another is the question of spin. Reporters love to catch politicians spinning their way out of binds. Fair enough. But it takes one to know one.

People in public life know that journalists often have the story written, mentally at least, before they start reporting. They know when they're being set up, and they've all had the experience of being milked for quotes to fill in the blanks. When I worked for Ralph Nader, I got a call one day from a *Post* reporter who was doing a story on the household moving industry, which I had looked into for one of the Nader books. Still fairly new to Washington, and untutored in the game of fetch-a-quote, I thought he was looking for information. I answered his questions with long discussions on the structure of

I wonder if, deep down, reporters question whether they have what it takes to cut it in the rough and tumble of political life

the industry and so forth.

Finally, he broke in. "Look," he said, "would you say that ...", making the point he wanted me to make.

"Well, I guess you could say that," I said. He promptly ended the call. The next day I discovered that I had said pretty much what he had said.

Something very similar happens to members of Congress and their staffs on stories that get turned against themselves. They end up feeling mugged. I don't know a single reporter who looks forward to being interviewed for someone else's story. They know what the guy at the other end of the line is up to.

Connie Bruck's recent profile of Hillary Rodham Clinton in *The New Yorker* is a textbook example. It is also almost a clinical case study in the way reporters project onto people in public life the very traits they indulge in themselves. We learn, for example, that Hillary Clinton is a woman with an agenda. Bruck, the reporter, of course has none. We also learn that Clinton has a tendency to use people for her own purposes. Reporters don't use other people? In their working lives that's about all some do, as Janet Malcolm, another *New Yorker* writer, pointed out a few years ago. They enlist the subject's confidence, pump and cajole them for quotes, and cast them aside or else reward them with favorable mention if they confirm the reporter's thesis. What is Bruck doing with Mrs. Clinton, if not using her to advance her own celebrity journalist persona?

Bruck tells us Mrs. Clinton wouldn't talk with her. *She wouldn't talk with the press.* In Washington there is no sin more grave. You can be a scoundrel and a knave and get away with it as long as you say nice things about reporters and feed them stories. The question Bruck doesn't ask — reporters never do — is

whether any sane person in public life would relish talking about themselves to someone like her.

Reporters say they dwell on matters like congressional pay and perks and personal foibles because it is their solemn watchdog duty to do so. That's valid to a point. But there are other things at work too, and one of them is laziness.

Say what you will about government and Congress, they are open for all to see. Every congressional salary, every office expense, appears in a thick volume published twice a year. Digging up dirt here is a little like fishing in a hatchery. You can troll the public record and still have plenty of time to do *The McLaughlin Group*, free-lance pieces, and speeches to interest groups. By contrast, corporations and other private institutions are much tougher to crack.

The result is a lopsided picture of American life that has major political implications. If Americans heard as much about corruption and waste in the corporate sector, for example, as they do about Congress and government, then our politics might be a lot different. If a congressional salary of \$138,000 is excessive, what about the reported \$2.3 million salary of the chief executive of Bristol-Myers Squibb, or the \$12 million salary of the chairman of Equitable Life Insurance, which is almost enough to pay the salaries of the entire Senate. Those Harry and Louise ads would have a slightly different twist if people knew that insurance company chief executives frequently make over a million dollars a year, and that the industry can take an estimated \$15,000 from their customers' premiums to pay the likes of George Will to entertain them with a speech.

The intense competition for ad dollars and the fear of libel suits contribute to the press's tendency to focus on Congress and government instead of the private sector. But there's also a more subtle influence, one that is wrapped up in the strange social dynamics of Washington.

After almost two decades here, I perceive among some in the media a sense of superiority to people in public office. Dan Quayle was right on this point, though in a typically narrow and self-pitying fashion. It did annoy the baby-boom reporters that he was first of their

The question reporters never ask is whether any sane person in public life would relish talking about themselves to someone like them

generation to arrive at the White House. Quayle saw this in ideological terms, but it was much broader than that, as the fate of Bill Clinton suggests. Reporters today see themselves as generally superior to the people they cover — smarter, better educated, more discerning. At the same time I occasionally wonder if, deep down, they don't question whether they have what it takes to cut it in the rough and tumble of political life.

So *The McLaughlin Group* becomes a form of institutional revenge, as do presidential press conferences. The pols are, of course, legitimate targets of criticism, nobody would deny that. But the press seems to forget — seems *eager* to forget — that being a politician calls forth dimensions of character that journalism generally doesn't. Say what you will, these people have to face the voters every two or four or six years. They have to deal with angry constituents, rabid interest groups, reporters, and colleagues that they'd like to stuff in a trunk. They have to deal with a messy world in which the good is often the least bad, and they have to try to solve problems instead of just snickering at the efforts of others.

I'm not suggesting a return to the old see-no-evil days of Washington reporting. The point is not to be nicer to members of Congress. Rather, it's to judge them the way you yourself would want to be judged. It's to get the story — including the context in which it occurs. Attack-mode journalism has fed an impression that the only problem with Washington is a bunch of bums in office. This leads to a predictable story cycle. A new crop of reps arrives, greeted with fluttery stories about the bold new reformers who are going to change

the system. Then, a year later, come the tongue-clucking stories about how the system changed *them* instead. A year later the process starts all over again. Set them up, knock them down — and in the process ignore the problems in our political culture of which Congress is just one part.

The so-called House Bank scandal was a perfect example of gang-tackle journalism that misses the point. Few reporters bothered to find out how the system really worked. The fact is, most House members knew about as much about the House Bank as you and I know about ours. The typical "overdraft" was really just a gap of a few days between the bank's receipt of a check for payment and the rep's deposit to cover that check. Most of them didn't even know the lapse was occurring, because the bank never informed them — just as the rest of us aren't always aware of overdrafts unless our bank informs us. Had they known, they would have adjusted their check-writing schedules, and that would have been the end of it.

A few representatives really did exploit the informality of the system,

and those are the ones the media should have nailed. The House leadership, moreover, were the ones running this show. Because reporters didn't ask the obvious question — what did the typical representative actually know and what was reasonable to expect of him or her — everyone got tarred with the same brush, and "overdrafts" became a major issue in the 1992 elections. Good thing they weren't debating something frivolous, like health care or NAFTA.

The House Bank also showed how the media conveniently overlook their own role in a story. Few reporters pointed out, for example, that one group besides House members was able to use the bank. This was members of the media, who were able to cash their personal checks. True, they couldn't keep accounts there — essentially the bank was really just a payroll office. But the check cashing was no small perk. It saved them walking several blocks in the Washington heat and waiting at the ATM machine with the hoi polloi.

Just think what story a Washington reporter could make out of that! ♦

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BOOKS

THE PRESS'S OWN INFLATED FIGURES

BY J.D. BROWN

Politicians of both conservative and liberal stripes have "delivered the policies of a great and sophisticated nation repeatedly into the hands of the peddlers of economic snake oil," writes Paul Krugman. Journalists should enjoy and profit from his lively telling of how this came about. But don't get too comfortable. Unfortunately, charges Krug-

PEDDLING PROSPERITY: ECONOMIC SENSE AND NONSENSE IN THE AGE OF DIMINISHED EXPECTATIONS

BY PAUL KRUGMAN
NORTON. 303 PP. \$22

man, we're a big part of the problem.

The author, an MIT professor described by *The Economist* as "probably the most creative economist of his generation," is known for both theoretical work and a willingness to jump into public debate. In *Peddling Prosperity*, he illustrates wonderfully the historic interplay between ideas and policy, and the role that journalists have played in that drama. His explanations of much-used but little understood economic concepts are simple, not simplistic. Readers without economics training should not be scared off.

By his reckoning, the past two decades have been marked by a particu-

J.D. Brown is senior producer for economics at The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour.



larly negative phenomenon: the rise of the "policy entrepreneur." Readers will recognize the monster: he or she often resides in think tanks, seems to know precisely what is wrong with the economy and how to fix it, has a propensity for showing up at the side of candidates and politicians, and turns up regularly with op-ed pieces, in news stories, and on television public affairs programs.

In fact, some of the most influential of Krugman's policy entrepreneurs have come straight from the world of journalism. Most prominent of all among the first group Krugman takes on — the so-called supply-siders of the late 1970s and early 1980s — is Robert Bartley, editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. Krugman writes of a "cultural reversal" within journalism during the 1970s that allowed the editorial page of the *Journal* to become "a hotbed of radical right-wing economics." Composed "of men whose background was entirely in journalism," including Jude Wanniski, who came from the *National Observer* to the *Journal*, and Irving Kristol, editor of *The Public Interest*, Bartley's group picked up on the theories being spun by traditional conservative economists, added the ideas of a few iconoclast economists such as Arthur Laffer, churned all this around in their own heads, and created something altogether new: "the major ideology that came to be known as 'supply-side' economics."

Krugman is not impressed: "Now, there is nothing wrong with journalists

(some of my best friends ...). As most of them will admit, however, they are usually better at reporting facts than at generating concepts In the 1970s, however, Bartley and Wanniski managed to convince themselves and a significant number of politicians that they had discovered some fundamental truths about economics that the mainstream ... had failed to discern." Among the results: the spectacularly unsuccessful idea that the government could dramatically lower taxes and cut the deficit at the same time.

Mainstream journalists may or may not have been convinced that this group had uncovered fundamental truths, but most did come to accept without much question that supply-side was an important part of the public debate and a legitimate branch of economics. (Krugman tells of a call he received in 1992 from a reporter for a national newspaper asking where she might find a university economics department with a supply-side bent. His answer: There's no such thing.) Supply-side economics, propounded by a small group led by journalists and given a forum and legitimacy in the coverage of the majority of journalists, was in this very real sense triumphant.

But that was then and this is now. Now the triumph belongs to a new group of policy entrepreneurs who began pushing their ideas during the 1980s and rose to policy-making power with Bill Clinton. Krugman

CHARLES WALLER

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dubs this group — led by such figures as Robert Reich, Lester Thurow, and Robert Kuttner — the "strategic traders." This time the emphasis is not on tax policy, as with the supply-siders, but on America's place in a changing world economy, and Krugman's criticism focuses on the development of theories by "strategic traders" that call for a more aggressive role for government. In particular, he challenges the current preoccupation with the notion of "competitiveness," seeing in a mostly groundless idea the potential for a self-defeating trade war.

Again, as Krugman tells it, this group used and abused the theories of mainstream and more cautious economists in the universities (including Krugman himself this time). And again, journalists and the media played a prominent role.

The ideas of this circle, Krugman writes, form "a doctrine that comes from outside the mainstream of economic argument; that was largely created by journalists, and largely argued in the pages of newspapers and popular magazines; and that, like supply-side economics, rouses the intellectual ire of those who should be political allies of its proponents."

Here, *The New Republic*, which "became a sort of house organ of strategic trade," plays something of the former role of *The Wall Street Journal*. And though both Reich and Thurow hold academic postings, they are "arguably ... more deeply rooted in journalism than in academia During the 1980s both men published exclusively in newspapers and semipopular magazines like *Foreign Affairs*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and *The New Republic*." Krugman also points to the "surprising" role of *BusinessWeek*, "the nation's leading business magazine ... which kept up a steady drumbeat of concern about the issue of U.S. competitiveness throughout the 1980s."

Once again, the ideas that were once floated in think-pieces in journals and op-ed pages are now the framework for policy in the White House. Once again, the economic outsiders, treated as a legitimate part of the policy debate by the mainstream media, were able to grab the reins of policy formation, as politicians eagerly sought out those who

would offer them simple answers to difficult problems. And once again, Krugman predicts, many wrongheaded policies are likely to follow. (In this regard, he points to the absence of noted health care economists on the Clinton health care team.)

Some will no doubt see in this attack the revenge of the nerd. Krugman, passed over for a top job in the Clinton administration, openly criticized the appointment of Laura Tyson as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers. But the problem of which voices are heard is central to how journalists cover the issues, and here Krugman is most effective. Take, for example, one of the vital questions of the day: jobs.

Most people would probably agree with the proposition that the United States is losing an important part of its manufacturing base and the jobs that go with it to foreign competition. Indeed, this is a chief tenet of many of Krugman's policy entrepreneurs who rose to prominence in the 1980s and today serve in the Clinton administration.

It is also a staple of media coverage. During the NAFTA debate the image of the factory closed and moved to Mexico was a potent one, standing for a wholesale movement of labor. In the day-to-day media take on the jobs problem we have become used to the by-now casual reference to low-wage, cut-throat foreign competitors stealing domestic jobs.

But is it true? Well, certainly some industries have shrunk or died as a result of low-wage competition elsewhere, some factories did and will move to Mexico, and some laid-off factory workers end up flipping burgers. But Krugman tells us, with numbers to back him up, that overall the answer is no, the U.S. has not lost its manufacturing base to foreign competition. The truth, he says, "is so far removed from the conventional wisdom of journalists and policy entrepreneurs that it sounds shocking."

What is happening is that the U.S. economy is undergoing a long-term shift away from manufacturing and toward services. Our factories are becoming more productive — they can do more with fewer people — and Americans are spending more of their income on services than they did in the past. The result is fewer manufacturing

jobs. But the result is not necessarily a less competitive manufacturing sector in the world's markets. (Krugman compares this situation to what happened to agriculture earlier this century. Very few people work in agriculture today, but the U.S. is highly competitive in agricultural products.) The loss of jobs, in other words, has little to do with competition from abroad.

Some economists think Krugman takes this argument too far. They're convinced that the new global marketplace is at least one of the important factors affecting jobs and wages in the United States. That debate goes on. The point for journalists is not that Krugman is absolutely and definitively correct, but that he very well *could* be correct. And to the extent that we leave out this kind of analysis our reporting on the subject may be based on bad or incomplete information.

It would be nice if professors made all this easier. Generally, that's not the case. For one thing, not many economists can write or speak to a general audience, and not enough economists are willing to get involved in public policy issues, preferring instead to work within the highly specialized, highly abstract profession that economics has become. On page 8 we are told that Robert Lucas, "without question the most influential economic theorist of the 1970s," has never appeared on any public affairs program. But forty pages later we learn that Lucas "prefers to express himself through dense mathematics, leaving it to others to popularize his ideas." Small wonder that few TV producers are calling the professor.

Journalists who cover economics and policy know that Krugman's neat line between the professors and the policy entrepreneurs is seldom so neat in real life, because some professors do indeed like to take on a larger policy role. When exactly does someone become "entrepreneurial"? (And therefore untrustworthy?) Lawrence Summers, now the under secretary of the Treasury, makes an early appearance in *Peddling Prosperity* as a young wonderboy of the economics profession, publicly taking on Robert Reich at an important gathering of economists and policy-makers in 1983. By book's end, Summers is part

of the same administration as Reich, pushing a policy argument that Krugman clearly finds untenable.

Krugman is quite correct in saying that we need to listen more to the professors and work to avoid easy answers to what are almost always complex and shaded problems. But the point should not be overstated. In the rich cacophony of policy, the academic experts are, and should be, just one voice amid the din. When the factory does close, its workers won't look to MIT for help.

They may look there and elsewhere for insight, however, and journalists should be helping. Real people living in what Krugman calls the age of diminished expectations need to hear a lot of different "stories," from many different sources — professors and policy entrepreneurs and others — to help explain this thing we call the economy.

The truth is that on the most important questions nobody really has the answers. Krugman describes the "magic economy" that existed in the United States in the decades after World War II, a time of rising expectations and attainment. Then something happened. By around 1973, "the magic went away." That is, the rise in our living standard slowed; the rise in real wages slowed; many measures of poverty increased. Something important happened to the American economy that grips us still.

But what exactly happened? Why did the magic leave? Among the most important things Krugman tells us in this stimulating book comes in answer to this question. "Let me cut to the chase," he writes with honorable candor. "The real answer is that *we don't know*. There are a lot of stories out there. Most of them, including the ones that have achieved the widest currency, are dead wrong on logical or factual grounds. There are some less popular stories that could be right — but if you are honest with yourself, you will admit that nobody, yourself included, knows which if any of these stories actually is right."

The problem at every turn is that "we don't know" is not a very popular answer. It's understandably not popular with politicians, who must convince voters that they damn well do know. It's not popular with the policy entrepreneurs, who have to sell their ideas to feed their

families. Krugman aside, I'm not all that sure how popular it is among economists, who must face a good deal of professional pressure precisely to be part of the club that does know.

One group, however, should have no problem with "we don't know." Journalists must strive daily to tell honest stories about the ideas and politics behind economic life in this country. For us, "we don't know" is the best starting point of all.

IS JUSTICE SERVED?

BY JAMES BOYLAN

On December 1, 1988, Hedda Nussbaum took the stand in a New York City courtroom to testify against the man the newspapers called, for want of a better term, her "lover" — Joel Steinberg, who had abused her and was now charged with murder in the death of their illegally adopted child.

THE WATCHFUL EYE: AMERICAN JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF THE TELEVISION TRIAL

BY PAUL THALER
PRAEGER. 239 PP. \$55

A week later a story in *The New York Times* began: "Hedda Nussbaum, it seemed, was everywhere in New York this week. And, everywhere, people were drawn to her story." The explanation offered was the perverse ordinariness of her account — that of middle-class family life descending into drugs, violence, and squalor. Only in the twelfth paragraph did the writer mention parenthetically — so swiftly had this novelty become taken for granted — that her testimony had been presented live on local television.

The Steinberg trial was an initiation for New Yorkers into a practice that had

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already become commonplace in most states — television access to courtrooms, both live proceedings and taped excerpts used in other programs. The trial was broadcast during the state's eighteen-month television experiment, which resulted, after fits and starts, in legislation authorizing courtroom access under specified conditions until early in 1995 when, presumably, the whole question will be debated anew.

Paul Thaler, one of a squad of graduate students at New York University studying the effects of televised trials, looked to the Steinberg trial for answers to a question that he states as follows: "Could television be responsible for altering the attitudes, judgments, and behaviors of trial participants, creating a radically new relationship between media and the courts?" In other words, does television result in distortion of courtroom behavior distinct from other possible distortions? To this end, he interviewed forty participants in the trial, including the judge, lawyers, expert witnesses, reporters, the defendant, and, through her lawyer, Hedda Nussbaum, trying in every instance to determine whether the presence of television had changed what they did in court.

The result is *The Watchful Eye*, or at least the book's second half. Given the framework in which he places his study — the introduction is titled "The Faustian Bargain" — it seems probable that Thaler was seeking an indictment, perhaps even a basis for expelling television from the courtroom. But in his conclusions he is fair-minded enough to concede that his interviews offer distinctly mixed evidence.

There can be little quarrel with his assertion that television coverage ties a trial more closely to a complex environment of public and media opinion beyond the courtroom. The interviews show that the participants had television continually in mind, often in effect reviewing their own performances. For example, Hedda Nussbaum dressed differently after seeing herself on the stand and even the judge may have modified his prickly behavior.

But the perceived changes in courtroom behavior inspired by television's presence were often more subtle and even contradictory. Some of the defense lawyers, whose client's interests were



Hedda Nussbaum in court: Did the cameras affect her testimony?

supposedly endangered by television, support the broadcasts; some members of the prosecution team oppose them. Steinberg says he believes that television's presence at the trial led to his portrayal in the news media as such a monster that he would have been ostracized even if he had been acquitted. On the other hand, one of the prosecutors asserts that the jury, conscious that it was sharing the trial with millions of viewers, tried so hard to be fair that it convicted him on a lesser charge, first-degree manslaughter, than the evidence warranted.

The views expressed in these interviews are the heart of this study. Journalists will find particularly interesting the observation by reporters who were interviewed that live television made their jobs harder because it led to second-guessing by editors watching the trial back at the office and to tougher competition for off-camera aspects of the story, particularly leaks from the lawyers. Hence, much coverage of the trial wandered off into the realms of spin and speculation.

The first half of the book, a survey titled "The Age of the Television Trial," is less satisfactory than the portions dealing with the Steinberg trial because it does not keep the book's prime question in focus — that is, how television affects the behavior of trial participants.

Here everything is grist for Thaler's mill — not only trials televised over the last thirty-odd years but also such spinoffs as staged retrials, hypothetical trials (Lee Harvey Oswald), docudra-

mas inspired by trials, and even Judge Wapner's small-claims court. Thaler dips as well into the historical panorama of the American trial as public furor, and to the extent that he acknowledges that trials subject to ferocious public prejudices took place long before the arrival of television, he undermines his case for the peculiarly baleful influence of television.

Indeed, the pretelevision popular press used misdeeds and mishaps of otherwise uncelebrated people as a vehicle almost from the day it defined private misery as a source of news. Who — before they were elevated to courtroom fame — were Chester Gillette, ultimately transmogrified into the principal figure of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*? Or Judd Gray and Ruth Snyder, the murderous but banal adulterers of the late twenties? Or Dr. Sam Sheppard, whose murder conviction was thrown out because of the misbehavior of the Cleveland newspapers? Even Joel Steinberg and Hedda Nussbaum attained celebrity status well before television came into their courtroom.

What can television possibly add to such a record? As Thaler suggests, it is the most seductive popular medium to date; in taking over the functions of the old tabloid press, it provides more to the audience while demanding less. But this does not mean that television is the creator of what Thaler calls "mediated feedback." The pressures of mass — some would say mob — opinion have always filtered back into the courtroom, creating the threat of prejudicial publicity — that is, publicity preceding and foreclosing an unbiased verdict. Television may have made these pressures

more intense, but the problem is hardly new or peculiar to the television age, and the courts have built robust defenses against such interference, starting with the rules for control of the courtroom laid down by the Supreme Court nearly thirty years ago in overturning Dr. Sheppard's conviction.

Thaler notes the arrival of Court TV, the cable channel devoted entirely to legal proceedings, and suggests that the creation of its national audience might in effect create a lynch mob of millions. Indeed, there is an underlying distrust throughout this study — and perhaps in the whole school of TV criticism spawned at NYU — of public good sense, a hint that the audience can be depended on to react in the worst way and that justice would be best served if the courtroom could be hermetically sealed. He could be right, if one were to judge solely by the rancid stuff that the public consumes in the current television environment of tabloid programs, talk shows, and bloody local news.

But his chief exhibit — the Steinberg trial — stands in his way. There is little evidence here that the presence of cameras at the trial created a lynch-mob atmosphere; to the extent that there was such an atmosphere it was set in place before the trial by journalism in general, not by the camera in the courtroom. Most certainly, it was not created by the extended live broadcast of Nussbaum's testimony, an aspect of the coverage that Steinberg himself concedes was balanced.

Thaler brushes off the purported educational effects of trial coverage as nonexistent, basing his conclusion on an NYU dissertation concluding that public understanding of the judicial process had not improved during the eighteen-month courtroom-television experiment. But certainly what can be learned from watching a trial — and in extended portions, not snippets — is not confined to technicalities. Anybody who has served on juries knows that process becomes rote, that the learning is in the appraisal of human beings.

Studying Hedda Nussbaum, the watching public may have been more sorrowful than angry, more dismayed than vengeful. Through her they could glimpse the abyss, learn what it was like to slip over the edge. ♦

SHORT TAKES

THE ART LESSON

Thomas Nast, who was turning out a new anti-[Boss Tweed] Ring cartoon almost every week, was getting some odd attention. He was told that a group of wealthy gentlemen wanted to send him abroad to study under European masters, but he declined the offer. Soon he was visited in his home by an officer of the Broadway Bank, the institution in which the Ring kept its funds. The banker told Nast that the wealthy men were prepared to pay him \$100,000 if he would go. Tantalized, Nast asked half-humorously if the fee could be raised to \$200,000. Yes, came the reply, and the banker added, "You need study and you need rest. Besides, this Ring business will get you into trouble. They own all the judges and jurors and can get you locked up for libel. My advice is to take the money and get away."

This was getting to be amusing, and so Nast asked, "Don't you think I could get five hundred thousand dollars to make that trip?" Without hesitating his visitor agreed, saying, "You can get



five hundred thousand dollars in gold to drop this Ring business and get out of the country."

"Well, I don't think I'll do it," Nast stated. "I made up my mind long ago to put some of those fellows behind the bars, and I'm going to put them there." The banker got up to go, but then remarked, "Only be careful, Mr. Nast, that you do not first put yourself into a coffin."

FROM THE TIGER: THE RISE AND FALL OF TAMMANY HALL. BY OLIVER E. ALLEN. ADDISON WESLEY PUBLISHING COMPANY. 317 PP. \$24.95

FRENCH CONNECTIONS

I was getting edgy after the war, doing nothing in Paris but living it up, when I met a seventy-year-old man named Maxime de Beix. He was the stringer for *Variety*, the American show business journal, and filed stories to New York on the film and stage business in Paris.

His name had not always been de Beix. It had been Levy. But when the Germans had entered France, a family named de Beix had adopted him at the age of sixty so that he wouldn't be sent to a concentration camp. Max was the legman for New York, and I became the legman for Max. The job paid eight dollars for a column, and it took thousands of words to fill one. Working for *Variety* gave me an entry into another world. I received invitations to cocktail parties where I filled up on hors d'oeuvres so that I didn't have to buy dinner. I was welcome in French and American film offices. I even reviewed French films for *Variety*. I never gave a French film a bad review. The reason was that I lived in dread that the producer would find out how poor my French was and complain to the *Variety* editors. No one has ever questioned the credentials of a critic who writes a rave notice.

FROM LEAVING HOME: A MEMOIR. BY ART BUCHWALD. G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS. 254 PP. \$22.95

THE MOMMY TRACK

She was a "feisty and feminine fifty-year-old with the unmistakable Dorothy Hamill wedge of gray hair ... a congressman's daughter [with] a wardrobe befitting a First Lady ... an unlikely standard-bearer ... a former full-time mother ...," gushed *The Washington Post* (August 26, 1992). That Lynn Yeakel also happened to be the woman who won a hard-fought primary to become Pennsylvania's Democratic Senate candidate was mentioned, but it

was not until halfway through the *Post's* lengthy profile that any of the credentials she brought to the race were noted. The *Post's* next-day profile of incumbent Republican Senator Arlen Specter, however, led with the facts that he had been "a crimebusting district attorney and a mayoral hopeful."

The New York Times gave the world much the same view of Illinois's 1992 Senate candidates Carol Moseley-Braun and Richard Williamson: "She is commanding and ebullient, a den mother with a cheerleader's smile; he, by com-

parison, is all business, like the corporate lawyer he is" Not until the twenty-second paragraph did the *Times* note that Moseley-Braun was also a lawyer and a former federal prosecutor and veteran state senator, as well.

FROM RUNNING AS A WOMAN: GENDER AND POWER IN AMERICAN POLITICS. BY LINDA WITT, KAREN M. PAGET, AND GLENNA MATTHEWS. THE FREE PRESS. 330 PP. \$22.95

JOLLY GIANTS

Of late he had succeeded in placing two articles with the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life's* ill-fated rival, *Collier's*. Now James was in pursuit of the nation's biggest-circulation magazine, *Reader's Digest*, and its uncommonly rich fees of fifteen hundred dollars per feature. A March meeting with a *Digest* editor yielded an assignment for an article titled "How Good Is American Food?" which would gently suggest that the nation's appetite for big, out-of-season produce and embrace of frozen and convenience foods

and supermarkets were all that stood between the United States and its rendezvous with gastronomic greatness.

But much as Beard had opinions about these matters, he was no polemicist, and for the *Reader's Digest* assignment he produced prose of unequalled lassitude: "It is wise to appreciate what is in season for what it is. If one has

spent winters in France or Italy it is easy to accustom oneself to the winter vegetables, which are truly very good in their own form and which for the most



part have wonderful variations which many of us miss." Despite such writing, the piece was full of prescient thoughts ... on the pleasures of truly seasonal cooking and on the debilitating effects on the nation's larder of pink tomatoes, iceberg lettuce, and cosmetically perfect gargantuan produce. But any genuine ideological fire the piece might possess

was dampened both by the *Digest's* innate conservatism and James's sense of where his own future interests might lie. James could hardly condemn processed food and simultaneously plug canned petits pois from Green Giant — as he did in the article — with whom he hoped to reach a consulting agreement.

FROM JAMES BEARD: A BIOGRAPHY. BY ROBERT CLARK. HARPERCOLLINS. 357 PP. \$27.50

APOCALYPSE WHEN?

One major reason why the extent of religious publishing goes unnoticed is the policy of the secular press not to count sales made in religious bookstores when compiling the best-seller lists. If we truly want to know what Americans read, the policy has done a considerable disservice. There are over six thousand Christian bookstores across the United States, mostly affiliated with the Christian Booksellers Association that was formed in 1949. Gross sales approach two hundred million dollars. An astonishing number of the book titles deal with prophecy and the final days before Christ's Second Coming. If it is at all plausible to imagine that people take what they read seriously, we probably have as a proportion of the population as many Americans anxiously awaiting the end of the world in the 1990s as in the heyday of the Millerites.

FROM SELLING GOD. BY R. LAURENCE MOORE. OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 317 PP. \$25



As that famous detective would say, "elementary my dear Watson." Health care costs drive premium increases. But, as in most cases, the issue is much more complex and involves both the cost of medical services and the frequency of use of subscribers. Premiums go up....

- when hospital rates go up
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- when more patients use medical providers' services or use them more often
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Blue Shield Association)

The Lower case

Building cabinet Mandela's first task



Seoul Times 5/5/94

Yellow cab driver shot dead

By Our Reporter

The Frontier Post (Lahore, Pakistan) 8/10/93

Ethiopia gets two loans; \$17.45 total

Tri-State Defender (Memphis, Tenn.) 2/12/94

• Clients who found X-rated programs in their computers now satisfied

The Beacon Journal (Ohio) 4/19/94

Chief Palmer, 31, has been a member of the Brewster fire service for the past 13 years.

The Putnam Courier-Trade (Carmel, N.Y.) 4/21/94

Police want to see more of man who exposed self

The Asbury Park Press (N.J.) 3/26/94

The rain is preventing horticulturists and gardeners from planting themselves gingerly in moist soil and tending tulips and crocuses.

The News & Observer (Raleigh, N.C.) 4/1/94

Tracy's Massage Receives License; Mayor Makes Yearly Appointments

Sioux Valley News 5/5/94

Astronauts practice landing on laptops

The News-Press (Fort Myers, Fla.) 3/13/94

Injury victim has line on helping handicapped fish

Times-Courier (Charleston, Ill.) 4/12/94



'It was the happiest I have seen him since his wife, Pat, died last June'

New York Post 4/21/94

Arsenio Hall says goodbye to show; first non-scientist to lead Smithsonian Institution

The Philadelphia Inquirer 5/29/94

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